

Transforming Public Spaces in Mexico: The Case of Colonias Populares in Xalapa

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Abstract

The importance of public spaces in contemporary cities has been acknowledged and studied from different points of view and approaches by researchers of urbanism. However, most studies have focused on public spaces designed and produced by professionals for elite and affluent populations. In contrast, very little attention has been paid to the development of public spaces in those self-made urban environments “the popular habitat” of the developing world. In Mexican cities, the popular habitat is known as *Colonias Populares* (people’s neighbourhoods) in which the urban environment consolidates and integrates to the city by gradual improvement processes at different levels of the urban environment from household up to neighbourhood level and mainly through the initiatives and participation of inhabitants. Within these processes, public spaces also play a very important role within the processes of consolidation and integration into the formal urban fabric. Within this context, the purpose of this thesis is to examine the dynamics of public space transformation within the urban consolidation process of colonias populares.

The research examines various public spaces presenting different stages of consolidation in the colonias populares of the city of Xalapa-Veracruz in southeast Mexico. The research focuses on (1) the social relations and interactions of popular dwellers and other actors within the production process of public spaces; (2) the spatial actions and activities that give place to the physical configuration of public spaces as well as paying attention to the physical nature of the public space produced; (3) the different strategies and activities that residents and different actors carry out to protect, maintain and control public spaces; (4) finally, it studies the use, the possible conflicts over usage, appropriation and the role of the actors’ culture and activities developing the life of public spaces in the popular habitat.

To achieve a holistic understanding, the research examines the dynamics of public space transformation following a socio-spatial-symbolic framework of analysis, in which the urban environment is examined through its social and physical processes of development and materialization as well as its social and spatial process of everyday usage. Moreover this approach includes a symbolic dimension taking into account that these processes take place because of the meanings and representations that popular dwellers construct about their surrounding environment which in turn influences processes of urban production and consumption.

The research is carried out using a qualitative methodology with an ethnographical approach based on a multi-method strategy. In this way, the thesis builds up its different arguments from informal conversations, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, photographs, personal documents, newspaper articles and drawings. This data was collected through extensive fieldwork carried out in five different colonias populares. It focused on specific public spaces in each neighbourhood. Through these cases the research seeks to demonstrate that public space transformation is important for popular dwellers in their agenda of urban consolidation. Finally, it aims to develop a greater understanding of the development and spatial construction of public spaces in the context of Mexican cities from which decision makers can learn in order to configure better public spaces and enhance the physical and social conditions of the urban environment, particularly in the context of the low-income population.

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*To Luz del Carmen, the two
Jose Marias & Eduardo*

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Chapter One



Introduction

Introduction

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1.1. The Popular Habitat and Public Space

“This open space used to be full of rubbish, it was used by the National Electricity Company to dump waste materials, yes, yes, and it was a place full of rubbish. There were lots of snakes and animals; once my son was playing there, he was still a child; and a poisonous snake was about to bite him. So one day, we decided to clean up the area. All the neighbours together collected all the garbage, we put it away and we called the municipality and the electric company, well, we wrote them a letter so they came to pick up all the rubbish. Little by little we managed to clear the whole place, of course we all got organised. Nowadays we have a committee to keep the park in good condition. After cleaning the space we thought about having a bandstand and my husband negotiated with the authorities and we got it 13 years ago we have been always taking care of the park [...] we want to buy some slides for the kids, we would like to build a table next to the bandstand for kids to play or even for people that come to have lunch.”

Rosa Isela (Colonia Ferrocarrilera, Xalapa)

Throughout history Mexican cities, and in general cities of Latin America, have been produced and transformed through similar processes. From the second half of the 20th century, the accelerated urban growth brought about the development of low-income peripheral developments characterised by a precarious environment located far from city centres and growing around the consolidated city's fabric. These peripheral neighbourhoods have formed what is known in Latin America as the “popular habitat”. The popular habitat is characterised by the occupation of the territory by individuals and groups, who modify it in order to fulfil their needs and develop essential activities of life, the occupiers are not only users of the space but significant modifiers and transformers of it through their actions in the physical environment (Garzon et. al 2000). In the Mexican context, the popular habitat has been called “*colonias populares*” (people's neighbourhoods or popular neighbourhoods). *Colonias populares* are settlements which are commonly developed by informal (or illegal) means on peripheral land in major Mexican cities. In some cases, private or state-owned land is invaded by squatters who later negotiate with the owners to obtain the legalisation of the settlement. In other cases, private land owners illegally sell land for housing in areas which has been foreseen by the government for agricultural communal land called “*ejidos*”. In some other cases, *colonias populares* have been also created by the subdivision of land carried out by the government within their urbanization programmes. Nowadays, many of these neighbourhoods

have been fully integrated and many others are on the way to an urban consolidation and integration. Consequently, the constant transformation of the urban environment of these neighbourhoods in most cities is tangible; the participation and initiative of different actors with different visions and objectives in shaping the built environment at different levels (dwelling-neighbourhood) brings about a very dynamic and diverse urban space.

The importance of public spaces in contemporary cities has been acknowledged and studied from different points of view and approaches by researchers of urbanism. However, most studies have focused on public spaces designed and produced by professionals for elite and affluent populations. In contrast little attention has been paid to the development of public spaces in those popular self-made urban environments. The spatial dynamics and urban transformation of low-income neighbourhoods in Latin America have been studied by many researchers with different interpretations and approaches, however, most of them have given greater importance to the urban morphology of the settlements and self-built practices related to the architectural production of the private environment (the house)(e.g. Bazant 1982; Rapoport 1988, Viviescas 1989; Bolivar 1990; Kellett 1995; Herrasti 1998,; Klaufus 2000). On the other hand very little attention has been paid to the collective environment and all the different elements that it includes such as public spaces, urban services, and communal facilities.

In general, research on public space in popular settlements has been scarce. However, there have been some studies which have dealt with the public environment, although not specifically addressing themes regarding public space dynamics of transformation and development. In the 1980's, Vogel (1981) and Riaño-Alcala (1986) focused their studies on social practices and public space appropriation in Brazil and Colombia respectively. A pioneer on public space research in low-income neighbourhoods in Latin America was the study of Matas et al. (1988) who carried out a study in the *barrios* (low-income neighbourhoods) of Santiago de Chile, regarding the morphological, visual, and perceptual dimensions of neighbourhood parks and streets. Later on, in the 1990's, Riano (1990, 1996, 1998) studied appropriation and self-built practices in public spaces for sports and recreation in the barrios of Colombia and Ecuador. Viviescas (1997) and Saldarriaga (1997) also offered various interpretation towards public space in the Colombian urban planning context. Rojas (1997), Niño and Chaparro (1997) also in Colombia, contributed with an ethnographical study of the streets and the culture of public spaces of the *barrios*. Moreover,

in Chile, Segovia (1997) studied the uses and appropriation of public space in low-income neighbourhoods from a gender perspective. Bolivar (1990), as well as Perez Valecillos (2000a), in their studies in Venezuela have given us some hints about public space and they affirm that in the *barrios* land is insufficient and open spaces for the recreation of children and the relaxation of adults have rarely been left. Only streets serve for small meetings, which brings about great shortage of spaces for sports and recreations of families. Moreover, Perez Valecillos (2000, 2000a) has given a series of recommendations for the improvement of public spaces in peripheral settlements. Finally, more recently, Segovia (Segovia and Oviedo 2000; Segovia 2001) has also focused her research on public space in tackling themes about production processes, development and people's participation.

In general, these studies have made a significant contribution to the study of public space development in popular environments and take into account the prominent role of inhabitants in the development process. However, they have only opened a new line of research that requires further exploration in other contexts within Latin America. Integrated approaches combining public space dynamics of development and transformation, combining socio-spatial dimensions, and examining participatory practices of public space production and consumption have been lacking in the research of popular urban environments. On the other hand, these investigations have thrown light on relevant aspects regarding public space attitudes and life in the popular habitat in Latin America. Let us recapitulate some of their affirmations and assumptions. Riaño (1998) in her study in Ecuador suggested that the residents of popular neighbourhoods fundamentally differ from other urban groups, particularly from those groups of higher incomes, in the way that they live in the city. She argues that in fact the life style of the inhabitants of popular neighbourhoods is characterized by the intense social organization at local level, the development of multiple activities in the public space and the multiplicity of urban functions. Matas et al. (1988:51) in his research in Chile, regarding the attitudes of dwellers towards their immediate public realm, argued that public space in the urban environment of the poor do not constitute a clear notion. Based on questionnaires and observations, he suggests that low-income dwellers have a diffuse image of what public space is which contributes to a lack of concern over and low valuation of public space attributes. Thus, the low-income dweller grants to their public space very little significance. Similarly, Viviescas (1997) in the Colombian context affirms that there is a general spatial insensibility and simplicity which impede and limit peoples' understanding about the relations and meaning of public space as a container of expression, a product of

architecture, urbanism and art; and as a creator of symbolism, history, memory, fiesta, play, encounter, interaction, and conversation. On the other hand, other researchers such as Saldarriaga (1997) have stressed the importance that public space represents in the life of the popular dwellers. Saldarriaga (1997) argues that people's actions have played a significant role in the construction, improvement and maintenance of public space. Moreover, he argues that many communities have built, with their own efforts, public spaces for children's recreation and have achieved the provision of public spaces in their *barrios* in order to enhance their quality of life. Niño and Chaparro (1997) as well as Avendaño (1997) have also pointed out the struggle undertaken by dwellers in order to defend the very few spaces allocated for public use from the eagerness of leaders and developers to occupy them with buildings and private uses. Similarly, in the Mexican context, Moctezuma Barragan (1999) and Estrada (2001) have revealed similar practices and have argued that the poor have carried out a social battle to defend the little and few spaces that they achieve to keep for urban facilities and open spaces within their neighbourhoods. Further, they have avoided illegal occupation, appropriation and privatisation in order to satisfy a communal social welfare for recreation and entertainment of their families. All these arguments are very significant, and there are contradictions about what public space means for the inhabitants of the popular urban environments. Some researchers have argued that the poor do not care about public space and do not understand the meaning of public space in the neighbourhood environment while some others have argued that dwellers do care and have defended and promoted the development of public spaces in their settlements. These arguments raise the question: what is the reality in Mexico?

These studies have contributed to our understanding on public space in the popular Latin American context. However, the majority of them still leave contradictions and unanswered questions about public spaces dynamics of production and consumption in the popular habitat. Moreover, most of them lack robust empirical evidence and thorough examination of attitudes, perceptions, relations and actions of popular dwellers and other stakeholders in the transformation of public spaces. Our research on the dynamics of public space transformation aims to shed light on how popular dwellers interact with the public realm. Our main proposition is that public spaces play a significant role in the lives of popular inhabitants and this is demonstrated through the interventions of transformation, improvement, construction, use and appropriation of the public environment. In this way, popular dwellers aspire towards an urban continuity rather than discontinuity, integration rather than fragmentation and

towards a sustainable urban environment; this is demonstrated physically and socially in everyday acts of public space transformation.

1.2 Themes and objectives

This research is concerned with the dynamics of transformation of public space in the popular habitat. Public space transformations take place through processes of production and also through processes of consumption. This involves regarding the dynamics of transformation as processes that take place through activities of creation and configuration and also through activities of use. We transform space when creating it and we transform space when using it. Further, public space is examined as the setting in which processes of transformation take place. Researching on the transformation of public space entails looking at the public realm in the popular environment from a vantage point in which processes of production and consumption of public space are regarded as the result of the initiatives and participation of inhabitants. Further we take into account the fact that popular dwellers share a particular culture, values and aspirations, which are disclosed in the dynamics of public space transformation. To do this is necessary to scrutinize:

1. The social relations and interactions of popular dwellers with other actors within the production process of public spaces.
2. The spatial actions, strategies and activities that residents and different actors carry out to control, configure, protect and maintain public spaces. Also paying attention to the form of the public space produced through these actions.
3. The use, the possible conflicts over usage and the role of the actors' culture and activities developing the life of public spaces in the popular habitat.

Public space in this study is defined as all outdoor urban spaces outside the dwelling but within the neighbourhood environment. Thus the research deals with streets, neighbourhood parks, and playgrounds, including all the urban elements that define the character, content and symbolism of the public environment of the popular habitat. The research explores public space dynamics of transformation at neighbourhood level throughout the different stages of settlement formation and consolidation. This involves the following questions:

1. Why and how do the different actors shape the urban development process of public space in *colonias populares*?
2. What is the physical and spatial nature of the public space produced by these actors?
3. What are the different strategies and actions that actors undertake to protect, maintain and control the space?
4. How is public space managed, used and appropriated, what are the mechanisms and by whom?
5. What does public space mean and represent for those involved in the dynamics of transformation?

These questions lead the study of public space of popular habitats, integrating three aspects of its production: i) planning and design, ii) management and control, and finally iii) use and appropriation. So far, there has been little attempt to document contemporary processes in a holistic framework including the creation, use, character and meaning of public space in popular environments in Mexico and in general in Latin America. An integrated approach is developed that at first glance could appear broad in scope; nevertheless, applied to particular urban settings it give us a holistic knowledge of how a specific urban environment is socially and physically produced. Drawing on a broad literature from related disciplines, and extensive empirical evidence the study integrates a holistic approach (socio-spatial-symbolic) to study the processes in discussion at the micro level in popular neighbourhoods.

The basic objectives of the study are:

1. To develop a frame of references for analysing public open space in low-income neighbourhoods, using theoretical perspective conceived as interrelated notions: physical, social, symbolic and processes.
2. To identify key actors in the dynamics of transformation of public open space, their role, relations and interaction.
3. To apply an analytical framework in different public spaces and develop concepts that can help to achieve a better understanding of the urban environment of low income neighbourhoods.
4. To investigate the values, meanings, character, symbolism and identity of the public space in the popular habitat.

5. To produce recommendations that help to configure better public spaces, contributing to the improvement of the physical and social conditions in the public environment of peripheral neighbourhoods.

This research aims to develop a greater understanding of the development and spatial construction of public spaces in the context of Mexican cities, specifically the urban space transformation and evolution of the built environment of low-income neighbourhoods. Moreover, it seeks to contribute academically to the conceptual understanding of the roles and relationships of the urban production processes and public space configuration, from which designers, planners and social scientist can learn, not only in the Latin American and Mexican contexts, but also in a global context where there is an increasing need for comparisons for the better understanding and functioning of our urban environments throughout the world.

1.3 The Research Setting

The colonias populares of the city of Xalapa in the state of Veracruz have been chosen to carry out the development of the research. Xalapa is an intermediate sized city with almost 400, 000 inhabitants (INEGI, 2000). It is located between the coastal zone of the Gulf of Mexico and the mountainous area of Sierra Madre Oriental in the southeast of Mexico. The origins of Xalapa (in common with other Latin American cities) go back to pre-Hispanic times, consolidating its development during the colonial and independent period when it was declared capital of Veracruz. In the 20th century the city consolidated as a modern centre of economic, cultural and governmental activities with great influence in the central region of the state. This was a determinant factor contributing to its massive urban growth from the second half of the century as experienced in other major urban centres in Latin America. In this way, Xalapa represents a significant urban laboratory to explore the concerns of this investigation. More importantly locating the study in Xalapa contributes to extend urban research to provincial cities in Mexico which have been marginalized by most researchers in the country.

Another relevant aspect for choosing this city as a research setting is because Xalapa boasts of being a city of public open spaces; it has even been even called by diverse local groups, the “City of Flowers”. This is due to the existence of a great number of parks (56) and green

spaces (400)¹ with a great variety of exuberant vegetation. However, all these spaces in the diversity of the city represent sites of diverse dynamics in accordance to the different agents that contribute to their permanence. A colonia dweller states *“the parks and the avenues of the centre are always being protected, well cared and maintained, but what happens with the public spaces of our colonias”*. In the local newspapers of the city, we frequently find articles



Figure 1.1 Xalapa’s local newspaper publishing articles about the public space problematic in its colonias. Source: *Diario de Xalapa*.

about public space dynamics taking place in the colonias of Xalapa. We read headlines such as *“The Xalapeños fight for green area”*², *“Individuals use communal spaces for their own benefit”*³, *“Green space converted into car parks”*⁴, *“Green space about to disappear”*⁵, *“The municipality intends to relocate families in open spaces”*⁶; *“Intentions to destroy communal spaces in colonia...”*⁷. (Figure 1.1) These headlines come from the voices of the inhabitants of the colonias of Xalapa and shed light on relevant issues which question how public space is produced and consumed in Xalapa. In this way, the colonias of Xalapa and the dynamics that at first glance are identified through local newspapers reveal conflicts and problems taking place in public space of the popular habitat and therefore reinforce the appropriateness of this setting to explore the dynamics of public space transformation-production and consumption.

¹ Data provided by a planning official in an interview at the municipality of Xalapa (September 2002)
² *Diario de Xalapa*, Vidal, G. page 10/A (15 March 2002)
³ *Diario de Xalapa*, page 3 “Sección solo respuestas: Ciudadanía y Análisis” (13 November 2002)
⁴ *Diario de Xalapa*, page 3 “Sección solo respuestas: Ciudadanía y Análisis” (27 June 2002)
⁵ *Diario de Xalapa*, page 3 “Sección solo respuestas: Ciudadanía y Análisis” (8 June 2002)
⁶ *Diario de Xalapa*, page 3 “Sección solo respuestas: Ciudadanía y Análisis” (16 August 2002)
⁷ *Diario de Xalapa*, Correa, Y. page 10/A (26 October 2002)

1.4 Methodology

In order to provide an answer to the different issues and questions, the research is based on a qualitative methodology with an ethnographical approach. It is believed that this approach is needed to understand the public space as it is transformed, experienced and understood in the popular habitat. Besides, it has been recognized the lack of qualitative approaches in urban research in Mexico. Experts on urban research in Mexico have argued that there is an imperious need to carry out urban research with a qualitative vision and not only through quantitative or demographic approaches which have widely characterised most studies in the country. They further argue, that there is a need to take into account qualitative, cultural and symbolic perspectives and they also conclude that so far the knowledge, experiences, values and productive activities generated by ordinary people have been overlooked (SEDESOL 1996). In this way, the investigation takes place in five peripheral colonias of Xalapa, through semi and unstructured interviews with inhabitants of colonias populares with key figures such as neighbourhood activist and promoters of neighbourhood development. Inhabitants' documents related to public spaces dynamics of transformation such as photographs, drawings and letters were also gathered. Since the investigation is looking at social and physical processes and their mechanisms of interaction, participant observation also represents an important research tool. Further, observations about public space form, physical aspects and visual characteristics were also recorded through photographs and drawings.

1.5 The structure of the thesis

The research consists of seven chapters. Chapter two tackles the theoretical and conceptual framework in which the dynamics of public space production-transformation and consumption are embedded. Firstly, it sets up the scenario of an integrated approach for the study of public space transformation based on a socio-spatial-symbolic approach including theories and concepts related to the social production and social construction of space, development processes and behavioural concepts of space production. Secondly, it studies public space concepts and definitions, main contemporary issues of public spaces and their roles and significance in the urban environment. Finally, the chapter concludes with a study of the evolution and growth of the Latin American city during the second half of the 20th century. The period, in which cities rapidly grew and developed by popular urbanisation, this has especial reference to the Mexican context.

Chapter three focuses on the methodological approach of the research. It describes the research methods employed to collect the data to answer the questions of the investigation. Firstly, it introduces and defines qualitative methodology with ethnographical approaches. Secondly, it describes the strategy to select the research setting and case studies and the kind of data sources available in these settings. Then afterwards, we turn to explain the process of fieldwork and data collection. The chapter also describes in detail each methodological technique and how these contributed to obtain significant data to answer the main questions. Finally, it identifies how the data was interpreted and analysed. In addition, it also discusses the suitability of the methodological approaches adopted.

Chapter four is about the research setting. The city of Xalapa is introduced through a brief historical examination of its urban development from the pre-Hispanic period in the 15th century, until the development of colonias populares in the second half of the 20th century. It describes the urban changes and growth of the city and concentrates in detail on its urban transformations after the 1950's, when the rural migration and massive growth gave place to the development of low income peripheral developments. Finally, the chapter also introduces the colonias populares in which the dynamics of transformation public spaces are explored. It briefly presents how these colonias were created, their physical conditions of consolidation and introduces the public spaces from which the research draws.

Chapter five examines in depth the dynamics of public space production in the colonias populares, in terms of the actors, their roles and interaction in the improvement and development of public spaces. It tackles how the stakeholders initiate and carry out the process of public space development. It explores the factors that foster and constrain the transformation, improvement and consolidation of public spaces through examples of different streets and neighbourhood parks in the colonias. In general, the chapter examines the social interactions taking place within the colonias among neighbours, and outside the colonias with external agents from the local authority and shows how the different interests and objectives of those involved shape the nature of the development process.

Chapter six scrutinizes the physical manifestations of the social production of public spaces examined in chapter 5. Firstly it examines the significance of public space allocation in the colonias. Later on it examines what popular dwellers visualise and aspire to in the spaces allocated for public use. Afterwards, we turn to study the materialization of public spaces at

the different scales within the neighbourhood environment from the micro-household scale of the pavement to the collective-macro scale of streets and neighbourhood parks. It demonstrates that public space is shaped through a combination of residents' initiatives, efforts and resources as well as by the interventions of the local authorities. The combination of both interventions gives places to rich spatial and physical dynamics defining the permanent character and the form of public spaces.

Chapter seven concentrates on the uses and spatial and symbolic appropriation of the public space produced through the different processes examined in previous chapters. It identifies the way different groups and individuals appropriate public spaces in accordance to their culture, interests and needs. In this way, the chapter identifies the daily practices and events that take place at different moments in the public life in the colonias and examines how these uses also recreate the everyday character of the colonias. The chapter also analyses the conflicts that emerge from the different attitudes and behaviours of the different individual and collectivities creating and recreating aspects of public life. Furthermore, it explores the significance of public spaces in the colonias life and finally examines the meanings that public space and its different dynamics represent to those involved in the transformation processes.

Finally, Chapter eight seeks to draw out the conclusions of the research together by linking the most relevant arguments developed throughout the thesis. Firstly, it links the main theoretical arguments of the thesis with the empirical investigation. Later on, it discusses the findings of the research and their practical implications for the betterment of the processes of public space development and life in the colonias. Finally, it provides suggestions for future research on public spaces in the Mexican context.

Chapter Two



Dynamics of Urban Transformation
Theories and Concepts

Dynamics of Urban Transformation: Theories and Concepts

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2.1 Introduction

This chapter will define the theories and concepts that underpin the research about the dynamics of transformation of public space in the popular habitat. It is divided into three different sections. The first section aims to explain the different theories that integrate a socio, spatial and symbolic approach to the study of the urban space; interrelated theories and concepts from architecture, urban planning and development will offer a theoretical umbrella under which the analysis of public space unfolds with a holistic perspective. Afterwards, the second section will define public space according to the different standpoints of contemporary urban analysts. Then, the main issues constraining its contemporary urban nature are briefly described; and later on, the different dimensions, roles and benefits that public space plays and provides in the urban environment are tackled. This is done having as a main purpose to stress the significance of public spaces in cities.

It is important to mention that in order to answer the questions of the research about the dynamics of public space transformation the author has drawn from a variety of theoreticians mostly from Europe and North America. These have looked for explanations from a wide variety of perspectives not only from political economy perspectives (dominant approaches in Latin America) but also from social-behavioural and cultural standpoints which provide helpful tools to explain process of public space transformation from our perspective. On the other hand, most western theoreticians have generalized based on urban environments of the developed world and some of their assumptions may not be entirely applicable to Latin American popular environments. If this is the case, the empirical part of the thesis will affirm or challenge the assumptions put forward in this chapter. Further, it has been attempted to include Latin American authors, however in this context, urban research has been highly concentrated on economic and demographic approaches¹ which do not represent significant theoretical tools for the sort of themes under investigation in this thesis. In fact, the researcher aims to look at public space dynamics from perspectives which have widely been neglected in Mexican urban research (behavioural, cultural, and symbolic). Moreover, recently contemporary European and North American authors have also worked towards holistic and integrated approaches to the understanding of urban space which in Latin America, these sorts of approximations have been little undertaken so far. Regarding public

¹ Garza (1999) offers a comprehensive overview of the urban research produced in Mexico in the last decades. He concludes that studies from the interrelated urban disciplines have been concentrated on themes such as marginality, urban poverty, urban migration, and urban growth, with a very quantitative approach.

space research there have been some Latin American authors who will be mentioned, however as mentioned in chapter 1, research on public space is scarce.

Finally, drawing on research carried out in Latin America, in the third section, the chapter turns to the popular habitat, considering it as the setting where the processes of transformation of public space are studied. Without an examination of the processes of popular urbanization, it is impossible to fully understand the processes of public space in the colonies. It is essential to study the main characteristics and issues of popular urban environments in Latin America and concretely in Mexico to set up the platform in which public space dynamics are explored in subsequent chapters.

2.2 A socio-spatial-symbolic approach

2.2.1 Processes of production and consumption

In this research public space transformation takes place through processes of production and consumption of the urban environment. These processes are regarded as social and spatial processes which give place to the existence of the urban space. The study of processes is important to the understanding of the resulting product which is the city, or public space in our case. I will start by drawing on Harvey's (1996) arguments about the importance of the study of processes that give place to the urban environment –the production process. He argues that process takes precedence over things; that the study of the urban space should be focused on processes rather than things and should regard things as product of process. It is important to consider the relationship between the urbanising process and this thing called the city (Harvey 1996:21). Harvey sees the process that give place to urban form as a dialectical one and argues that the relationship between process and thing (referring to the form of the city) becomes complicated because things, once constituted, have the habit of affecting the processes which constituted them. He further argues, that the ways that particular 'thing-like structures' (such as political-administrative territories, built environments, fixed networks of social relations) precipitate out social processes and the fixed forms these things then assume have a powerful influence upon the way that social process can operate. Moreover, different fixed forms have been precipitated out at different historical moments and assume qualities reflective of the social processes at work in particular times and places (Harvey 1996:21-22). In this sense, this study approaches the transformation of public space as a social process in

which processes of production and the resulting product influence each other. A theoretical framework sustaining this approach is the work of Lefebvre (1991) who sees urban space as a social process which produces and leads to the materiality on which we live. Lefebvre argues that the production of the space must 'operate' or 'work' in such a way as to shed light on processes from which it cannot separate itself because it is a product of them. To understand the urban materiality of public space in colonias populares, it is necessary to focus in the process of production of 'things' (public spaces) as Harvey and Lefebvre argued.

Processes of urban production give place to processes of urban consumption. The consumption of the space is defined by the social relations that take place in that space. In addition to the study of the social relations shaping the urban form and the form itself, the research is also focused on how the form is configured through its use. This use is defined as the consumption process. Consumption is commonly understood as the process of using something after it has been produced. Campbell (1995:194) defines consumption as any activity involving the selection, purchase, use, maintenance, repair and disposal of any product or service. In contrast Warde (1991:304) with a more intangible social approach sees consumption as comprising a set of practices which permit people to express self identity, to mark attachment to social groups, to accumulate resources, to exhibit social distinctions, to ensure participation in social activities and more things besides. These definitions help to regard the process of consumption as the process that involves how public space is used, transformed and defined through the daily practices of its users, the kind of ideas in the minds of the users about the public space; what public space means to them, and how identity, attachment and social distinctiveness is expressed.

The production and consumption process of our urban space as Harvey argues represents a dialectical relationship. On one hand, the production processes creates the urban materiality, which in turn will affect the way this process takes place, moreover the use of the urban space also influences both production process and the material object itself. This entails a dialectical and a dialogical relationship between both process of production and consumption of the space. Eventually both processes configure and reconfigure the urban environment. Therefore in this study consumption is not the process that comes after production. Production and consumption are processes that interact with each other and influence each other; they both interplay in a dialectical and dialogical relation. In this way we agree with Michel De Certeau (1984) who sees consumption processes somehow as processes of production of the space

which is created through the expressive environments, daily routines, and cosmological ideas which also produce space. In this way, urban space and its transformation is the result of the dialectical relationship of production and consumption processes influenced by the social, political, economical and material aspects of the collectivity that perform them.

2.2.2 Towards a socio-spatial-symbolic approach

If we are seeking to explain the transformation of public space as a dialectical and dialogical entity, an integrated approach is needed. Integration rather than field separation is often claimed to be necessary to achieve a complete understanding of the urban space. The separation of different fields of knowledge or theories trying to explain urban reality does not offer a full explanation of what the urban reality is. In regard to this, Madanipour (2000:159) points out that in the different fields of urban geography, urban sociology, urban planning, and architecture a diversity of perspectives and understandings of space are provided; urban space is treated as places which bring together human beings, part of the natural environment, as materials objects, and as nodes of human societies. In an overview of the different disciplines that tackle the study of the urban phenomena, Madanipour argues that there are clear trends in the different approaches to the understanding of urban space. The first perspective sees the city as a collection of artefacts: buildings, roads, trees, and other material objects. Most architectural and some urban geographical writings fall in this perspective. This approach is more interested in the environment than in people and its interest lies on describing and explaining how material objects and artefacts came in to being and are being transformed and used. The second perspective, on the other hand, sees the city as agglomeration of people. The two traditions of urban ecology and political economy are the main trends in social sciences, particularly in human geography and urban sociology. Towards an integration of these disjointed views of the urban space, Madanipour argues that our picture of urban structure will only make sense when a socio-spatial perspective emerges to replace these two disjointed views (Madanipour 1996:31). He also affirms that social and physical dimensions of urban form have a dynamic relationship. Physical fabric is produced and conditioned by different social procedures. At the same time, the form of urban space, once built, can exert influence upon the way these procedures recur (Madanipour 1996:33). This is clearly connected to what has been discussed by Harvey (1996) through his dialectical standpoint. Madanipour (2000:160) further argues that there is a third perspective which criticises the first two perspectives (physical-social) as views from above. This third perspective comes from a phenomenological viewpoint and takes into account the way first

person perspective develops and how this is central to the way we understand and experience places (this leads to viewing the city in some abstraction, emptying it from its colours and emotions). This perspective embraces the spontaneity of every day life (Madanipour 2000: 160-163). Madanipour advocates for an integration of the different perspectives for a holistic and thorough understanding of the urban space.

With a similar perspective, Malcolm Miles argues that one of the insights offered by an integrated perspective is that thinking in oppositional pairs, such as the aesthetic and the social, or form and process, is not helpful if it means these aspects are seen in isolation from each other rather than in a dynamic relation: processes have form and forms are produced through processes, and their separation is a matter only of intellectual convenience (Miles 2000:5). Moreover to a socio-spatial approach we need to include the symbolic dimension in order to have a complete integrated perspective. A symbolic dimension in place making and in the study of the urban environments has been often neglected as Donald Appleyard argued:

“The professional and scientific view of the environment usually suppresses its meaning [...] Environmental professionals have not been aware of the symbolic content of the environment, or of the symbolic nature of their own plans and projects [...] Professionals see the environment as a physical entity, a functional container [...] a setting for social action or programs, a pattern of land uses, a sensuous experience - but seldom as a social or political symbol.” (PPS 2004)

Towards an integrated approach, Madanipour suggests that materiality can only make sense if representation and substance are interconnected and understood through the social practices which produce them. The socio-spatial-symbolic configuration of the material city, the world of people and objects, therefore, becomes a medium of representation and action, which can only be understood when these different dimensions are overlaid onto one another. (Madanipour 2000:163). Further, Madanipour summarizes the socio-spatial-symbolic approach as follows:

“It is only in a fragmented, static concept of space that we see social processes as separate from the physical and mental space. If, however, physical and mental spaces are both socially produced, then both are subject to the process of production of space. They are by definition, the component parts of a more comprehensive conception of space: a physical space that is produced by complex bureaucratic and financial systems of a development process and is used and attributed with meaning through everyday life. There will be no need to use the conventional dualities of physical versus mental or physical versus social space. A more unified approach can see space as the objective, physical space with its social and psychological

dimensions. It will be an integrated concept in which the ways societies perceive, create and use space are addressed simultaneously. This conceptualization, however will not be complete without taking the dimension of time into account (Madanipour 1996:30)

This socio-spatial-symbolic framework is the prominent theoretical support of our study about public space transformation in the popular habitat. Following Madanipour's arguments we seek to understand public space dynamics in an integrated approach which understands public space as process and product with their social, physical and psychological dimensions. In order to explain and base our study under this theoretical umbrella, it is essential to consider two other important theoretical approaches for the study of the urban space. These are the social production and social construction of urban space. Certainly, these approaches have been very influential in the study of contemporary urban space and we need to consider them together as well, if we seek to approach urban dynamics with an integrated perspective.

2.2.3 The Social production of space

To study urban transformation as a product of social relations, we must refer to the theories of the production of space developed by Henry Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 1991) who treats the space as a product of social relations as a social and political product. The complex and contradictory nature of space is that *"space is permeated with social relations; it is not only supported by social relations but it is also producing and produced by social relations"* (Lefebvre 1991:286 cited in Low 2000:130). The analysis of the urban space along this theoretical umbrella is an approximation that seeks to analyse urban space as the medium and outcome of social being (Borden 2001). Lefebvre brings together objective and subjective understanding of space by tracing both back to the process in which space is produced (Madanipour 1996:18). Borden (2001:5) following this approach argues that the space is not a theatre or setting but a social production, a concrete abstraction –simultaneously mental and material, work and product. Low (2000:128), also under this framework, in her analysis of public space in Costa Rica following Lefebvre's conceptualization about the social production of the space stresses the materialist nature of the term social production as useful in defining the historical emergence and political/economic formation of urban space. She argues that the social production of the space includes all those factors – social, economic, ideological, and technological –that result, or seek to result in the physical creation of the material setting. Furthermore, she argues that social space is a whole and that any one, event or illustration has within it aspects of that whole (Low 2000:130)

In the social production of space, Lefebvre (1991) identifies three moments of social space which are the perceived, the conceived and the lived spaces. This is the theoretical framework from which many contemporary researchers have hung down different explanations about the urban space dynamics as a social product such as the ones mentioned above. The perceived space refers to the *spatial practice*, which means the way space is organized and used. This is about the material space. The second is *representations of space*, which refers to the conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers and is represented by plans, drawings, architectural and urban projects, and so on. And the third is about *representational space*, which means the space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, the space of inhabitants and users. The latter is conceptually identified by Edward Soja, following Henri Lefebvre, as the 'thirdspace' a category which is neither the material space that we experience -*spatial practice* nor a *representation of space* (Soja 1996). Thirdspace is instead a space of representation (*representational space*) a space bearing the possibility of new meanings, a space activated through social action and social imagination (Crawford 1999). This theoretical puzzle gives place to a relationship of the social and the spatial – in Edward Soja's term the 'socio-spatial dialectic' –it is an interactive one, in which people make places and places make people (Borden 2001).

Soja (2000), within his theory of the 'thirdspace', coined the phrase '*urban imaginaries*' which refers to "*our mental or cognitive mappings of urban reality and the interpretive grids through which we think about, experience, evaluate, and decide to act in the places, spaces, and communities in which we live*" (Soja, 2000:324). This phrase has also been used in the Latin American urban literature as '*imaginarios urbanos*' (urban imaginaries) by Fuentes-Gomez (2000) and Silva (2003). Fuentes Gomez defines '*urban imaginaries*' as the images that inhabitants of a territory create about the space they live in, how they perceive them and what they mean to them. Fuentes Gomez argues that the '*urban imaginaries*' help to establish the mechanisms of urban identity and belonging. He also states that '*urban imaginaries*' are constructed from the multiple experiences of inhabiting and thinking about the city. Furthermore, Fuentes Gomez argues that examining '*urban imaginaries*' can aid an understanding of the functioning of the deep structures which organize the functioning of the society.

Urban imaginaries are social and historical constructions that lead to the continuous creation of figures, forms and images of the city. Through these, we seek to apprehend and comprehend the real and unreal characteristics and attributes of the city and its urban life. (Fuentes Gomez 2000:9).

For Silva (2003) '*urban imaginaries*' refer to spaces not so much produced concretely but imagined. He argues that '*urban imaginaries*' are a question of 'civic aesthetics', which involves an attempt to comprehend the city constructed by its inhabitants. Silva argues that these are constructs through which we represent the themes of our daily lives, such as love, sex, danger, death, and the desire for the future. These become important variables for comprehending urban life, a defining space where the destiny of current societies is hatched (Silva 2003:12). For Silva, *urban imaginaries* entail discovering how the inhabitants of the city, under the new temporal paradigm, invent forms of urban life in order to create their city as an aesthetic and political act (Silva 2003:29). '*Urban imaginaries*' therefore represent a way to study the city from the 'citizens' points of view'. It can be seen in these ideas how the theme of 'representational space' of Henri Lefebvre has been influential. The space of symbols, images, inhabitants and users as described by Lefebvre represents the theoretical framework of the '*urban imaginaries*'. In this study, '*urban imaginaries*' is used as a phrase that perfectly describes the social differences, worries, fears, desires, dreams, projects and aspirations of how the space and the urban life should and could be. Urban imaginaries will be used to describe these concepts throughout the thesis.

As regard to public space dynamics of transformation, this study cut across the three moments of Lefebvre's social space. The study looks at the *spatial practice* space as it is organized and used by the different agents that intervene in both process to create a material entity. For us, the *representations of the space* as considered by Lefebvre, is not only the space created by intellectuals but since in the popular urban areas inhabitants play a significant role as urbanists and planners of their own environment, they can be regarded as 'the dominant mode of production', following Lefebvre's words. In the popular urban context, the *representations of space* could be created by both professionals and also by inhabitants. In this way the social production is a theoretical tool that helps to analyse public space in terms of its generative process, approaching public space as the result of the relations of those involved in the production of the space. In this sense public space is socially produced and refers to how public space is planned, built, designed and maintained by the myriad of actors involved in the process. Our study also cut across the *representational space*, looking at

public spaces as they are lived through the associated images and symbols, through the '*urban imaginaries*' that inhabitants and users construct about their public space. This space is also called the spaces of the everyday life and this is interpreted by other authors as the social construction of space.

2.2.4 The Social construction of space

Another approach within the scope of analysing space as a socio-spatial entity is that one about the social construction of the space. Low (2001:127) argues that social production and social construction are terms often used interchangeably. This is because, somehow they overlap with the different moments of the social production of the space established by Lefebvre. However, the social construction of space, rather than referring to the social relations of material production process of the space; refers to the consumption of the space produced. This involves analysing urban space in regard to how places are consumed and what meanings derive from those spaces in the minds of those who consume it.

Madanipour (1999:879) argues that the spaces around us everywhere, from the spaces in which we take shelter, those which we cut across and travel through, are part of our everyday social reality. Our spatial behaviour, which is defined by and defines the space around us, is an integral part of our social existence. As such we understand space and spatial relations in the same way that we understand the other component parts of our social life. Anne Buttimer (1976) states that the importance of the social construction of the space is for the understanding of urban spaces and places in terms of the insider, the person who normally lives in and uses particular place of setting (cited in Knox and Pinch 2000:258). On the other hand Madanipour argues that the various perspectives on space can be classified as those looking from inside, that is the subjective views from the first person's point of view, and those looking from outside, that is the third person's external view (Madanipour 1999:880). He illustrates this point with the idea of what is home for one person becomes a mere object for another. What is for one person a refreshing experience of feeling in touch with nature becomes for another party just a person walking past in the park. What is a rich web of emotions and attachments to places of a town for one person becomes a set of statistic on pedestrian behaviour for another (Madanipour 1999:880). Therefore as different groups give different meaning to space, it becomes a multilayered place, reflecting the way places are socially constructed. Knox and Pinch (2000:259) argue that the crucial idea in the social construction of space is that of the live world, the taken-for-granted pattern and context for

everyday living through which people conduct their day-to-day lives without having to make it an object of conscious attention. With this approach of the spatiality of social life, Knox and Pinch point out that it can be broken into three dimensions. At the broadest scale there is an institutional spatial practice, which refers to the collective level of social construction of space. The second dimension is about 'place', which can then be thought of as related to the human consciousness and to the social meanings attached to urban spaces. Finally, individual spatial practices refer to the physical presence and spatial interaction of individuals and groups (Knox and Pinch 2000). In this sense Healey (1997:56) also argues that *'we are all active agents in the construction of our own lives. We reflect on, consciously adhere to, or actively set out to transform our conditions of life. Social life is thus both 'socially constructed' and 'actively made' as we live our daily lives'*. Moreover, the social construction of the space is understood as the meanings we create about our everyday life and the things that surround us. Madanipour further argues that the social fact about the cities, however, is that these objects and their relationships have been created by human agreement and bear particular significance and meaning for people. Therefore, the multiplicity of agents involved in the development, exchange and use of places is reflected in a diverse set of meanings attributed to these places (Madanipour 2000).

Similarly, Low (2000:128) also states that the social construction of space is the actual transformation of space, through people's social exchanges, memories, images and daily use of the material setting, into scenes and actions that convey meaning. She also argues that the term social construction may be reserved for the phenomenological and symbolic experience of space as mediated by social processes such as exchange, conflict and control. Therefore, the social construction of public space can take place through contested patterns of use and attributed meanings. Low (2000:128) argues that the distinctions between social production and social construction of urban space is a helpful one as a vehicle to contrast the ways in which urban space is socially produced both materially and metaphorically, and socially constructed through experience and social interaction. Furthermore as Harvey and Madanipour suggested, she argues that 'social production and social construction of public space is dialogic, that is, an ongoing, interactive, conversation-like process that changes through time, creating new ideas, social structures, and meaningful places. But it is also dialectical, that is, oppositional, often disruptive and contested, but ultimately politically transformative, uniting contrasting points of view and perspectives through new political and social alternatives (Low 2000:240). In this way both the production and the consumption of

public space are understood as socially produced and constructed respectively. The aim is to understand space as a product of social relations and also as a product of social practice in space adding to this framework the physical settings where this dialectical /dialogic relation takes place and influences it. Moreover space is seen as an element that signifies different meanings to those who produce and consume it.

2.2.5 Everyday architecture and urbanism

The everyday is a product, the most general of products in an era where production engenders consumption, and where consumption is manipulated by producers; not by "workers" but by the managers and owners of the means of production (intellectual, instrumental, scientific) Lefevbre(1997:33)

On the theoretical trends of social production and social construction of the space, various architectural analysts have adopted these conceptualizations to what they have called the 'architectural everyday' (Miles 2000), 'everyday urbanism' or 'urban vernacular' (Chase 1999). These are new interests in the field of architecture and urban design that pay attention to 'those elements of cities which represent the production of space by its dwellers'(Miles 2000:6). It is what ordinary people do in their everyday lives. It consists of local practices that take shape outside planning, design, zoning, regulation, and covenants, if not in spite of them. The relationship between the built environment and the social practices that occur within it reveal both intentional and unintentional effects of great importance. Activities produce distinctive forms, some of which acquire independent architectural manifestations (Kirshenblatt-Gimblet 1999:19). For Miles the architectural everyday can be seen, too, as a process of improvisation, using whatever comes to hand. If its characteristic forms include the hut and the kiosk, the shelter and the market stall, then these forms are found in different ways, in cities of both the affluent and non-affluent worlds. But it is the manner of their production, and more widely the production of space, rather than their incidental forms (interesting though these are) which set up the city as a whole. The architectural everyday, then, is the spatial practices of dwellers, and raises the idea that cities might be produced by those who inhabit them (Miles 2000). Certainly, our research about the transformation, production and consumption of public space in the colonias seeks to confirm what Miles suggests. Miles (2000:6) identifies the architectural everyday as a new strand in architecture that leads to further research, however he also recognizes that there have been studies in this line that are highly relevant to the architectural everyday study, (e.g. Hassan Fathy's *Architecture for the poor* (1973) and *Architecture for people*, edited by Byronb

Mikellides (1980)). In the architectural everyday approach the city does not consist of forms alone, the city is an event, a site of occupation, and occupation transforms cities in ways which are not always predicted (Miles, 2000:4). Moreover we could include the work of Amos Rapoport as a pioneer in the architectural everyday theories. Rapoport focused part of his extensive academic research in the vernacular and the popular, in the design practice developed by those who do not form part of mainstream design practice, that is to say the design practiced by non-professionals (e.g. someone building a shack, a diner, parking lot, a shop, etc.)(Rapoport 1994:219).

The previous theories of the everyday architecture and urbanism are also embedded in the space of *tactics* that Michel de Certeau suggests in 'The practice of every day life', which is related to the social construction of the space outlined above. He sees the space more as improvisational one in opposition to the strategic or planned (Certeau 1988). In the resulting cities of tactics, design and architecture are everywhere, and each individual and group is a designer of the city. The American urban designer John Kaliski (1999), following De Certeau, argues that in the resulting city of tactics, design and architecture are everywhere, and each individual and group is a designer of the city. The sometimes rapid yet often glacial changes and shifts in the street plans combine with the ongoing activity of adding and deleting buildings to form frameworks for individual and collective creativity. The person, who chooses a different commuting route, posts a sign over an existing sign, sells from a corner cart, or volunteers to organize a community meeting is as much a city designer as the developer and architect who construct a skyscraper or the city official who suggest an ordinance. The city is as much as a consequence of these fluid everyday actions as the overarching vision of urban designers who conceptualize fixed-in-time master plans (Kaliski 1999:105).

The architecture of the everyday life takes its roots from urban geography and urban anthropology. The former is concerned with the social production of space and the latter with space as culturally produced bound up in daily life, social activities and personal rituals. The combination of such perspectives brings about the idea that architecture is continually reproduced through use and everyday life (Borden 2001). Crawford takes the concept of the everyday to define the 'everyday public space' which is that one containing *'multiple and constantly shifting meanings rather than clarity of function. In the absence of a distinct identity of their own, these spaces can be shaped and redefined by the transitory activities*

they accommodate' (Crawford 1995, 1999). Unrestricted by the dictates of built form, they become venues for the expression of new meanings through the individual and groups who appropriate the space for their own purposes. Apparently empty of meaning, they acquire constantly changing meanings – social, aesthetic, political, economic – as users reorganise and reinterpret them (Crawford 1999:28). The dynamics of production and consumption of public space in the popular habitat is also shaped by these everyday acts of appropriation with shifting meanings and uses, along its consolidation as we will see in succeeding chapters.

2.2.6 Public space: An integrated approach

From the sixties Kevin Lynch (1990:409) argued about the need of an integrated approach for the understanding of public space. He argued that in order to design successful public space it should be understood in an inclusive way in which the idiosyncrasies of form, setting, function, climate, social pattern and cultural aspirations could be taken into account. Desirable, even possible choices of activity will vary from one class to another; a stimulating challenge to one person may be a terrifying danger to another; experiments in social role are permissible here and impermissible there (Lynch 1990:398). At the design level, Lynch initiated an integrated socio-spatial-symbolic understanding towards successful public space design which Madanipour later develops at the research level as we have already discussed. Public practices differ among cultures, income-groups, generational groups, and in the study of public space there must a close relation with those that create public space spatially-physically, socially and symbolically.

More recently, from another standpoint and stressing the importance of the processes of public space production, Bassand and Zept (2000:59) argue that public space requires an in-depth analysis of the processes by which these spaces are used, produced and shaped. Understanding how the representation and designs of 'producers' are constituted; understanding how the social patterns of users are organized; and understanding how spatial parameters are formalized are all required. On the other hand, Riaño (1999:8) addresses public space conceptually and practically from a threefold perspective of *built, regulated, and appropriated space*. In order to understand the social production of public space she examines it: (a) as it is physically designed and built by privately or publicly commissioned architects, planner and developers; (b) as it is regulated by public authority; and (c) as it is lived and experienced by groups and individuals. She argues that such an integrated and

interdisciplinary perspective has often lacked in public space research and has thus lead to a fragmented understanding.

A different approach for the understanding of public space is that one proposed by Ben and Gaus (1983). They also regard public space as a setting of social relations, however making the distinction between the private and public dimensions of public spaces through the criteria of access, agency and interest. *Access* refers to physical access to spaces, access to activities, access to information and access to resources. *Agency* refers to the nature of the actions of the agents dealing with public space, and *interest* refers to the private or public nature of the actions of the agents involved in public space. Some authors such as Madanipour (2003a) recognized the value of this approach in the empirical study of public space, however Madanipour argues that this approach is restricted to seeing public space as an instrumental approach, seeing public space as an asset in exchange, using it as resource, treating it as a commodity, and leaving aside the emotional and meaningful ties emerging from public space, that is the symbolic dimension. On the other hand, including this symbolic dimension Madanipour (2003) regards public space as meaningful objects within the city, as integral parts of our social existence, this objects have meaning for their users, and should not only be treated as physical entities *per se* but also as objects created by a collective intentionality, which represent emotions and attachment, with symbolism “...beyond their basic presence that makes them part of the social reality” (Madanipour 2003:880). Furthermore, Madanipour also suggests that apart from aesthetic dimensions, the urban fabric works as a psychological framework of how we feel about a space and how multiple senses and bodily experiences react to a place. It also has a spatial and functional framework of how a place is organized and used, a symbolic framework of how it has a meaning and value, and a temporal framework of how it has changed through historical time and how it changes through the moments of day and year (Madanipour 2003:125).

In conclusion, these different contemporary researchers help us to construct our own theoretical framework to analyse public space production and consumption including the spatial, social and symbolic dimensions. In this sense we approach public space as socially and spatially produced analysing the actors’ actions creating the space (planning, design and construction). These actions give place to a physical product also important to explore. Finally the study approaches public space as a consumption process, as a space socially and symbolically constructed through everyday uses, life, images and meanings, that take place

about the urban open settings. Popular urban environments represent a setting suitable to analyse urban processes with a holistic perspective due to the dynamism of its transformations towards urban consolidation. Pedrazzini et al. (1998) who focused in the Latin American context has already suggested this approach to the understanding of popular environments in an integrated way and he argues that '*popular habitats should be understood as the material, social and symbolic expression of the actors' diversity that interplays in the production, management and use of their built environment*'. However this approach has been little undertaken.

2.3 Perspectives into the development process

2.3.1 The development process

With the study of the development process, we pursue an understanding of the different stages and the forces that operate in the creation of the urban environment. This section reviews the most significant aspects that must be taken into account to understand the urban development process in the production of public spaces. Different models to understand the processes of the built environment development have been identified (Healey 1991; Madanipour 1996; Carmona 2003). These are mostly based on procedures of built environment production in developed economies with well established and regulated frameworks of development. Within the production of the built environment theory, these models are: (1) the *equilibrium models* (derived from neo-classical economy) which are focused on the spatial relations which takes place within a free-market framework, structured by the economic factors about effective demands, as reflected in rents, and yields; (2) The *event sequence models* (derived from state management) which describe the time-scale and the stages of the development process; (3) The *structure models* (grounded in political economy) which focus on the way markets are structured, the role of capital, labour and land in the development process and the forces that organise the relationships and drive the dynamics of the process; (4) The *agency models* (behavioural or institutional explanations) which are concentrated on actors, their roles, and their interests in the development process. Actors such as developers, landowners and planners are identified and their relationships with each other and with the development process in general are traced and described, and finally (5) the *institutional models*, which describe events and agencies and explain how they relate to broader structural forces. Madanipour (1996:135) having interpreted these models,

concludes that the study of the development process and its relations to urban form should be studied with an analytical framework founded on four interrelated notions: that urban form has physical, psychological and social dimensions; that the study of urban form is best made possible by tracing the process of its development; that the development process, as a social process will be best understood by addressing both individual actions and the structures which frame these actions; and that the understanding of this process will not be complete without addressing the social and physical contexts in which it takes place. Therefore this last model represents a significant tool for understanding how public space is physically, socially and symbolically produced in our context. It addresses actions, actors, roles, meanings their social relations and the social and physical context in which these processes take place.

2.3.2 Actors and Roles

If we are studying how spaces are created, it is important to recognize those who are involved. It is in our interest to explore the nature of the actions carried out by the different actors involved in the built environment production process. Carmona (2003) argues that processes of designing and producing the built environment involve a variety of 'actors' or decision-makers, each with their own objectives, motivations, resources and constraints, and connected in various ways. The development process is a function of social relations specific to time and place, involving a variety of key actors (developers, investors, politicians, consumers, etc). Within this process the state –local and national- is also an important actor, both in its own right and as a regulator of the other actors (Carmona et al. 2003:213). Moreover, Carmona argues that to more fully understand the development process, it is necessary to identify the key actors, their motivations, and objectives, their relationships relative to each other, their motivation for involvement in the development process and, more generally, why they might pursue –or be persuaded to provide –higher 'quality' (Carmona 2003). The way these actors act and react to different situations along the development process depends on different aspects Ian Bentley (1999) argues that human action in the form-production process depends both on the objectives of the actors concerned and on the resources available to them in pursuing these objectives. Furthermore, both the objectives and the levels of resource-availability are embedded at different levels in wider political and economy systems. Moreover, Carmona (2003) identifies key actors (developers, landowners, founders, investors, builders, occupiers, the community, public and private sectors) following the same line as Bentley. Carmona takes into account their political and economic activity and the

prevailing values that frame individuals' decision making (this relates to the structure-agency models mentioned above).

However, these views about the development processes of the urban space are contextualized in affluent capitalist societies (market oriented) and specialized (investors, professionals designers, planners, users, etc) modes of production, looking at the urban space as objects that are produced, sold and consumed. Although Carmona recognized that the different roles in development structure can be played by the same individuals at different moments reducing the gap between the producer and consumers, these frameworks impose limitations when studying the development processes of public spaces in popular environments in Latin America where some other social, political and cultural aspects come into play.

Arguing from a different perspective, the Argentinean sociologist Pedro Pirez (1995), inserted in the Latin American context suggests that apart from those structural processes dictated by the capitalist accumulation such as those described by Bentley and Carmona, we also find heterogeneous social realities, in which actors belong to very different economical, social, ethnical, cultural, of gender, and political universes. Therefore their behaviour is determined by their local reality and their behaviour in turn moulds local processes of urban development. Pirez argues that the roles that these actors play in constructing the city depends on the particular way in which they are organised as units of action in the city, and as a local reality. These units in turn, depend on their relationship with the urban territory. In this way actors can therefore be explained by their structural base (social and economical), their territorial base, through the representations they construct about the city, and finally through the strategies and actions they execute to achieve these representations. Pirez introduces the socio-territorial dimension in the development process, the existence of district and neighbourhoods to which people assign meaning which can constitute units of actions in the development of the city. Within this framework, he identifies actors determined by the logic of necessity, which is a logic developed totally or partially outside the market economy and regulatory frameworks (public policies) (Pirez 1995:12). This means that the actors are for example moving about looking for basic services in a neighbourhood, and trying to solve problems of the community. Pirez points out that this logic of development takes place in four primary modes: a) direct individual and collective actions b) community organization, based on solidarity for the direct production, c) organization of movements of demand and

claim before governmental actors, and d) that one related to clientalist relations², between community and politicians and governmental actors (Pirez 1995:13). Moreover, he argues that these processes are about the immediate satisfaction of a necessity, carried out by those who suffer it directly. These processes are called the 'self-production of cities', which is a mode of production usually carried out collectively, and some times communally (through solidarity), in order to fulfil the needs of those who organize and produce the built environment. These actors produce the city either in an autonomous way or somehow in association with governmental (public) actors or commercial (private) actors, hence linking to the other formal logics of built-environment production, and in some cases participating, though perhaps partially, within them. In this production process, actors not only satisfy their individual necessities, but often produce functional components of the city as a whole, in this way contributing to a wider necessity satisfaction (Pirez 1995:13). We will see in the subsequent empirical chapters how the model of development described by Pirez is reflected in the dynamics of transformation of public spaces in the colonias.

2.3.4 Actors' relations: Rules and Resources

In both modes of production of the built environment outlined above, the relations between the actors and the way they produce the outcome: the built environment, take place embedded on a set of social relations which are ruled by the actors' social practices and by the resources available for them to carry out these practices. This statement comes from the social theory of Anthony Giddens -'*theory of structuration*' (Giddens 1984) which refers to the rules and resources that govern actors' practices in the reproduction of social systems (the structure-agency-model³ is based on this theory). Rules refer to the techniques or generalisable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social practices, while resources refer to 'the means material and symbolic, whereby actors make things happen'. Production takes place when rules and resources are used in interaction. Taking the mode of production described by Pirez, the social '*rules*' in which the built popular environment is created are the collective action, the social networks established internally in popular settlements (community) and external to those (politicians, government and others), and the way this

² Pacione (2001: 566) explains clientalism as a reciprocal relation between individuals. Individuals and households may try to offset their disadvantage by cultivating as patron someone in a position to further their employment prospects or assist them in crisis. The patron-client relationships are a reciprocal one between two individuals. In exchange for the patron's help the client gives political support and contributes to the patron's status. The exchange is not legal or contractual requirements but is an informal understanding. The relationship is also a highly unequal one. Not only does the patron have a greater power, more economic resources and higher status, but usually has numerous clients, and the leverage any one of them can exert on the patron is therefore narrowly circumscribed.

³ Healey and Barrett (1990) put forth the concepts of rules and resources developed by Giddens, to explain and acquire a richer understanding of land and property development process through the structure and agency model of development.

social interaction takes place to reach an outcome: the urban environment. On the other hand the 'resources', are all the personal traits, knowledge, and possessions people bring to these interactions involving the economic, the political, and the social capital as well the physical objects available for the actors to produce housing, infrastructure, public services and so on. Rules and resources are constantly transformed through creative human action. This theory is helpful to examine how the different actors produce social and physical space, deploying different resources through different social interactions and at the same time consuming public space. Moreover, these rules and resources and the way they are performed and deployed are influenced by culture, as Rapoport argues:

The rules which guide the organization of space, time, meaning and communication show regularity because they are linked systematically to culture. Without trying to define culture one can say that it is about a group of people who share a set of values, beliefs, a world view and symbol system which are learned and transmitted. These create systems of rules and habits which reflect ideals and create a lifestyle, guiding behaviour, roles, manners, as well as built form (Rapoport 1977:119).

2.3.5 Power and actors

The built environment is the result of powers. Habraken (1983) states that the built environment, 'the site', and its transformation is the result of the power of individuals, groups, organizations and institutions who are in control of part of the site and therefore can change it. Built form in turns reflects the broader field of social interactions within which it occurs (Habraken, 1998:29). Similarly, Knox (2000:266) argues that material and social worlds are always mediated by power relationships and culture. He argues that 'social' issues of distinction and 'cultural' issues (e.g. taste or style) cannot be separated from 'political' issues of power and inequality. This view comes from the framework of social construction of the space. The social relations that take place in the development process, brings about micro-processes of negotiation. These are complex situations, in which there are many actors involved in the form-production process, and the outcome is determined by a power-play between them. Bentley (1999), from an urban design perspective, calls this relation 'masters and servants' relation. He suggests that those with the most power simply command the actions of those with the least. This concept is widespread, in both popular and professional cultures. In its commonest formulation, it is those with the economic power, who are seen as ruling the form-production process. However far more convincing is the more complex understanding of the process by taking into account the fact that actors deploy their resources of economic or political power, valued knowledge or cultural capital, in more or

less adroit ways, in attempts to make things happen the way they want (Bentley 1999:31). Bentley sets up his arguments on a relation between developers and designers. On the other hand Hillier argues that the shaping of public space is the result of local planning decisions and the outcome of power struggles between actor networks (Hillier 1998:226). Hillier in her approach integrates the community in the urbanisation processes and demonstrates how individuals and groups struggle and mobilise different values and logics to serve their purposes influenced by their identities, images, and aspirations (Hillier 2000). Both Bentley and Hillier offer a framework in which power plays a significant role between individuals and groups in the urban space production processes. The former identifies how power can be imposed on those of least power (although restricting his arguments to a developer-designer relationship), and the latter identifies how can power be resisted at the same time (on a wider planning network) integrating the community. Bentley expresses the idea of negotiations, rules and resources as follows:

Form-production process takes place through a complex pattern of negotiation and struggle between various actors. The built outcome of this process depends on the internal and external economic, political and cultural resources available to each actor and on the rules according to which the various actors deploy the resources they have (Bentley 1999:69).

In the context of Latin America generally the struggles between the actors are not only about built-form, but there are also other kinds of struggles between planning officials, public institutions and community; these primarily are about basic needs and strategies for urban survival. In relation to popular environments the poor struggle for housing, urban services, and for a place to live. The poor struggle for the right to live in the city and for integration to the urban society. We will see later in this chapter how popular inhabitants carry out these struggles. Further, in subsequent chapters, we will explore how struggle and negotiation takes place in popular environments in relation to public space transformation.

2.3.6 The production as a battlefield and contestation

In analysing the development processes different micro-processes come into play. Processes are formed by relations between actors, negotiation strategies and decision-making occasions, resources, rules of action and ideas. These processes are configured by different nuances influenced by competing powers, interests, and objectives. Bentley (1999:40) argues that these processes take place on a *battlefield*. He argues that the form-production process is a battlefield in which there are important factors influencing processes. First there is the

question of the power available to the various actors: access to economic or political power, or to valued knowledge or cultural capital. Second, there are the rules according to which the various actors operate in the production process (this is based on Giddens's Theory). Third there are the sanctions through which these rules are enforced. And finally there is the issue of initiative: who gets to set the agenda about what? This framework set up by Bentley raises questions about how these processes take place in the popular habitat, who and how to impose power and who finally dominates the agenda of the development process of public space. Within these scenarios, it emerges that the political dimension of the social relations is established by the actors and the roles they play within these processes. For Setha Low these processes are spaces of contestation, the planning, design, and construction of the city are processes of social production responsible for shaping the urban environment, encoding it with intentions and aspirations, uses and meanings that are often themselves contentiously produced. Interventions that physically shape the urban landscape attract opposition because they reproduce key symbolic forms that reference deep and still unresolved or unresolvable conflicts among social actors and collectivities (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003:20). In the context of Latin America the contestation and the battlefield can even take place for environmental resources available to shape the urban, which inevitably means the exercise of power and resistance to it⁴. Does contestation or a battlefield take place in the dynamics of transformation of public spaces in the popular habitat?

2.3.7 Conflicts and collaboration

It is necessary to recognize that if the processes are identified as a battlefield and contestation, then, there is a conflictive dimension in the production process of urban space. This also implies a political dimension within the planning processes, discussion and negotiations among the actors involved in development. Planners, citizens, local elected officials, developers, and others invariably have different views on what a city should be like and how to build it (Jacobs, 1996). This inherently means that the democratic process of city production is never achieved without conflict. Issues of power and struggle bring about issues of conflict in the development process. The political dimension in Latin American cities is an important resource since people acquire political consciousness through contact with external development agencies, planning institutions and policy makers, (Ghai and Vivian 1995) and this contact is often conflictive.

⁴ Ghai, D. and J. M. Vivian (1995) present how resistance, mobilization and contestation for environmental resources takes place with especial reference to the developing world.

Regarding public space development, Berman (1986) affirms that the desire for diverse and often competing groups to control the design and management of a public place like a plaza or park will increase the amount of conflict in the development and management process (in Francis 1989:165). Moudon (1991:16) argues that the 'public' is a complex set of actors with diverging views and different values. Yet public conflicts, rather than stifling the planning process, should in fact generate the potential for collaborative discussion of shared concerns about local environmental changes, through which people can come to learn about potential impacts and possible ways of valuing and addressing them. Similarly, Healey (1997) points out that through such discursive practices, people learn about each other, and about different points of view, and come to reflect on their own point of view. It helps to build up, across the diversity of ways of living and ways of thinking, a 'learning how to collaborate', and a richer understanding and awareness of conflicts over local environments can develop, from which collective approaches to resolving conflict may emerge (Healey 1997:33-34). Iracheta, a Mexican planner also argues that through collaboration each participant finds a reason to participate, and conflicts are reduced through actions, as well as resources being fostered (Iracheta 1997). Healey states that the challenge is to discover what the diverse people in a place are concerned about and care about, and to work out a way forward which will work for most people without excluding too many interests and values (Healey 1997:88). Therefore consensus should be reached. As Habraken (1983) argues consensus among powers must inevitably be part of transformation, through consensus transformation of the space takes place. In this sense, these arguments raise the questions about how conflicts are overcome and how collaboration takes place to achieve transformation of public space.

To conclude this section we can argue that these different theories about the development processes offer us important tools to explore the development processes of public space in the colonias in Mexico. Different questions rise from the previous theories about how these processes take place in relation to popular urban environments. There are key concerns for this study emerging from these theories: (1) the sort of actors involved in public space transformation, their objectives, interests, power and resources available and their rules of operating; (2) the conflicts that emerge in the development process; (3) the nature of the battlefield; (4) finally the variety of ways of collaboration and consensus building to resolve conflicts.

2.4 A behavioral approach

As has been mentioned, popular urban environments are created with the significant engagement of people with their environment. In parallel to the social-relations dimension of the production of the space described so far, urban spaces are also the result of a man-environment interaction which is mediated by human actions producing and consuming space. In this way, the urban environments are considered as the result of a man-environment interaction defined by the way people engage with their physical space, by the means of appropriation, territoriality, personalisation and consequently by participation. It is important to explore these concepts mainly studied by environmental psychologists, since the social production and social construction of space are also the result of human behaviour in space and in a close interaction with space. People create, become involved and establish relations with places to promote development, improvement, transformation through different practices. In short human behaviour is what produces urban space.

2.4.1 Territoriality

Territoriality is the mean by which humans and animals mark and determine their place, area, and living environment. Territoriality is defined by Bell et al. (1996:304) as 'a set of behaviours and cognitions which a person or group exhibits, based on a perceived ownership of physical space'. As defined by Altman (1975:106), it involves the mutually exclusive use of areas and objects. It also involves 'markings' that promote the display of personal identity, distinctiveness and regulation of social milieus (also cited in Francis 1989; Carmona 2003). It is based on perceived, attempted, or actual control of a definable physical space (Gifford 2002). Territory is essential for the survival of the species not only in terms of physical comfort but also in terms of its social well-being, and it achieves this through the provision, organization and structuring of space. Lawson (2001:164) also argues that our attachment to particular places and our willingness and indeed enthusiasm for defending it, is undoubted the defence of territories is a natural tendency of human beings in case of invasion. Territory serves as a mechanism for supplying stimulation, identity and security among individuals, and social reinforcement. According to Altman (1986) territoriality entails a sense of ownership, control over access to places (from small to large), the satisfaction of biological and social needs; it entails personalisation and defence and protection when boundaries are violated (Altman and Chemers 1986:121). Territoriality can satisfy the urban dweller's perception of social equalness and sense of belonging (Thomas 2002:22). As territorial behaviour is

performed by both humans and animals, some researchers believe that human territoriality is instinctive, driven by a need to claim and defend territory in a world where space is limited and relationships are determined through conflict over resources (Madanipour 2003a:52). According to Madanipour territories may serve either as an instigator to aggression or as stabilizer to prevent aggression. Where territories are not yet established or disputed, and when the boundaries between territories are ambiguous rather than well drawn, both humans and animals show evidence of increased aggression.

2.4.2 Personalisation

Personalisation is the means by which territoriality is manifested over the space. Personalisation serves both to signal that the territory is controlled by the occupant and to depict self-identity (Altman and Chemers 1986:143). Through personalisation we put a distinctive stamp on one's environment. Typically this occurs at, and makes explicit, the threshold or transition between public (group) and private (individual) domains, where small scale design details contribute to the symbolism or delimitation of the space (Carmona et al. 2003:68). Personalisation is about the relationship between the individual and the environment and the intention of controlling the appearance of the space. It can help to organize life and facilitate social relationships (Altman and Chemers 1986:137). In Altman's words personalisation means identity management, the regulation of self/other boundaries between a person or group and the social environment. Examples of personalisation are seen everywhere: employees decorate their work spaces with pictures and mementoes. Some car owners purchase vanity licence plates and gang graffiti is a way of saying, 'we control this area' (Gifford 2002:159). Personalisation of private space expresses tastes and values, and has little outside impact, while personalisation of elements visible in the public realm communicates these tastes to the wider community (Carmona 2003:98). In this way as Hertzberger (1991:30) argues, the character of an area will depend to a large extent on who determines the furnishing and arrangement of the space, who is in charge, who takes care of it and who is or feels responsible for it, who appropriates it. This certainly depends on the power and resources available to the actors and in the social and cultural framework (rules) in which they are placed, as was discussed in the previous section.

2.4.3 Appropriation of space

Therefore, individuals and groups appropriate a space through territoriality and personalisation. These two concepts are often used interchangeably, and that is because both

concepts intersect and overlap. A sense of territoriality must exist in order to appropriate and transform a place. We can regard appropriation as a territorial claim of space which means as Habraken (1998:129) suggested that is to act upon a territory by showing who belongs to through acts of transformation and territorialisation. Bassand (1990:9) argues that appropriation of the space takes place when social actors take possession of space according to the resources and their power in the social framework either of the existing laws, rules and norms, or the laws, rules and norms they elaborate specifically for a purpose. He states that space appropriation could involve conflict and along with other authors, he states that this allows individuals and social groups to express their identity and attachment to place and to realize their projects (Rapoport 1977; Altman and Chemers 1986; Pol 1996; Amante 1997). Concretely, appropriation of space implies building the environment (housing and its corresponding public facilities, monuments, as well as infrastructures, etc) and rehabilitating or destroying old built environment. Furthermore, appropriation of space is also frequently a process by which groups and individuals take symbolic possession of space: beautification of local communities, advertising in public spaces, painting murals of graffiti, furnishing or decorating one's house (Bassand 1990:9). The appropriation of the space implies the design of micro or macro landscapes, it also implies the establishment of a relation with the space, integrating it to our experiences, becoming attached and leaving our imprint, organising it and becoming an actor in its transformation (M.J. Chombart de Lauwe 1976, in Pol 1996). In the field of man-environment studies, there are different analysts who have focused on the theorisation of the appropriation of the space. For example Perla Korosec (1976) defines the concept of 'appropriation' as the feeling of ownership and controlling/managing a space independently of the legal status – by everyday use or identification (in Pol 2002:124). Moreover, Brower defines appropriation as the action of claiming a place to regulate what it is used for, under what conditions and by whom (Brower 2002:111). He also argues that it is the act of exercising control over a particular environment in relation to the occupation. He introduces the concept of 'defence' (territoriality) and a sense of belonging to the space. According to Brower the occupation of the space is influenced by the ability of individuals or groups to establish activity in a place. Defence depends on a perceived threat, which increases territoriality through the increment of vigilance, clarification of boundaries, restrictions of rules of use and strengthening signs of territoriality (in Pol 1996). As will be seen in future chapters these definitions are useful in explaining some of the aspects of public space production and consumption in the popular habitat. Enric Pol (1996:125) builds up a definition based on Brower's arguments, and argues that the appropriation of the space

includes the components of action-transformation and the symbolic identification. The first component refers to behaviour about how individuals and groups transform the space leaving their stamp on it and incorporating it into their cognitive and affective processes in a very active way, endowing the space with individual and social meaning through the process of interaction. Symbolic identification includes the identification with the environment and the self, defining identity by these means, developing continuity and stability of the self, gaining identity and group association, and consequently generating attachment to place. In this way, appropriation is the result of attachment and a care for place which implies familiarity with it, detailed knowledge and a sense of deep interest and concern for it. For Relph (1976) these are the components which constitute an attachment to places. The series of interactions of appropriation, modification, definition, defence, and personalisation of the environment in turn creates the identity of a place.

2.4.4 Culture and appropriation

From the perspective of environment-behaviour research, the relation between people and environments is the result of complex interactions among cultural, environmental (physical) and perceptual variables (Rapoport 1991:81). Culture plays a significant role in the way environments are defined, transformed and appropriated, as argued by Amos Rapoport, who in numerous writings defines culture as a 'way of doing things' (Rapoport 1991; Moore 2000). For Rapoport the activities that occur in any setting itself are a function of culture, primarily of a set of rules that are part of the culture in question (Rapoport 1991:81). He argues that all the definitions of culture can be classified into three classes: i) culture can be defined as a way of life typical of a group, a particular way of doing things; ii) a system of symbols, meanings, and cognitive schemata; and iii) a set of adaptive strategies of survival related to the ecological setting and its resources (Rapoport 1991:82; Elsheshtawy 2000:223-224). Moreover, Rapoport argues that culture is ultimately translated into form through what people do as a result of what is in their heads and with the constraints of the situation (Rapoport 2000). Therefore a close relationship between culture and the way people make manifest their territoriality, personalisation and appropriation is found. These concepts will help us to explore how the construction and transformation of the urban space is a reflection of the culture of the actors involved in the different processes. Moreover, Bassand (1990) argues that each group and each social class has its own form of a legitimate culture, including values, aesthetics, emotions, and tastes. This is similar to what Rapoport has also stated in relation to the built environment 'the way space and people in space are organized

reflects values, lifestyles, status' (Rapoport 1994:176). Bassand (1990:39) also argues that culture is manifested and founded through the use of signs and symbols, and values and knowledge, whose degree of sophistication is variable. All these help every actor, group or locality to gain awareness of their social status and in this way they become actors. It is this awareness which leads the actor to develop aspirations, to form an identity for himself and to make plans and participate in the functioning and changing of their collectivity or locality. Therefore appropriation and transformation of the space are shown by the signs and symbols, and values and knowledge of the individuals and groups creating culture and translating it into the built environment.

2.4.5 Environmental perception

In order to appropriate space for the betterment of the environment another dimension that emerges from the processes described in the previous paragraphs is the idea of perception. Perception is the means whereby people identify environmental problems, and threats to the surrounding environment which leads to certain territorial behaviour and appropriation and eventually to actions of improvement and transformation. Lang (2000) argues that the manner in which we perceive and cognize the world around us is the basis of environmental experience. It is the basis for the decisions we make about how to act in the settings we encounter and the way we respond to them emotionally (Lang 2000:84). People perceive problems and possible solutions in different ways, they define 'basic needs' differently and give them different priorities, they define standards and also ideal environments differently (Rapoport 1977:28). The perception people build about their environment can be affected by the meanings attached to it, by the people and groups occupying a place, and certainly by the physical environment and the significance this represents. Rapoport argues that any attempt to deal with man-environment interaction must involve three areas -knowing something, feeling something about it and then doing something about it. Therefore these aspects involved three dimensions: i) cognitive, the basic processes whereby the individual knows his environment; ii) affective, involving feelings and emotions about this environment, motivations, desires and values; iii) Conative, involving acting, doing, striving, and thus having an effect on the environment in response to the cognitive and affective processes (Rapoport 1977:28). Further, Rapoport argues that environmental perception includes the particular mix of attitudes, motivations and values of various groups which influences their perceptions of the environment and also affects their actions. It helps to explain how a few basic activities or

climatic types can result in a large variety of responses and settings, since solutions are consequences of perceptions.

2.4.6 People and participation

Bassand mentions participation as a part of the cultural dynamics which influence space appropriation (Bassand 1990). For Pol appropriation of the space helps to explain participation (Pol 1996). All these processes are the result of the perceptual dimension in the interaction of people and their environment as discussed by Rapoport (Rapoport 1977). Undoubtedly, from the interaction of people with their environment through their perception, and behaviour of territoriality and appropriation, there emerges a participatory process. Participation implies an engagement with the environment and with the others living in that environment. Through participation individuals identify themselves with their environment, their setting, as well as with the group they belong to. They become aware of common needs, identify each other and eventually participate and create a collective action to transform the place in which they live. These actions are also influenced by culture as Rapoport argues. Participation means collaboration among neighbours and it can provide helpful solutions to many of the challenges of accomplishing daily life (Healey 1997).

Participation is defined in a United Nations report (1979:225 cited in Desai 2001:119) to mean 'sharing by people in the benefits of development and involvement of people in decision making at all levels of society'. In the formal planning process Arstein (1969, 2000) identifies eight levels of participation on a ladder which at the bottom are manipulation and therapy which means 'non-participation'; then informing, consultation and placation which means 'degrees of tokenism'; and finally on the top of the ladder are partnership, delegated power and citizen control, which is means real 'citizen control'. This simple analysis emphasised that 'participation' could mean different things in different circumstances, and that it could be used to control the public as easily as to enfranchise it (Cowan 1998:188).

There are different terms in connection with people's participation such as community participation, collective action and empowerment. Community participation takes place when people living in a certain territory (e.g. neighbourhood) manage to articulate a collective desire for transformation by getting involved in the planning and enactment of that change and maintaining and building that change in the future (Roe 2000:59). Organized participation implies *collective action*, which takes place through the mobilisation of the organized

community to achieve their purposes. The actors 'produce' the collective action because they are able to define themselves and their relationship with the environment (Melucci 1995:43). Vandana Desai (1996) argues that 'groups with a consciousness of common purpose are likely to form organisations. Through their group membership, individuals could become more active counterbalancing and shifting power in their favour'. In urban popular settlements in Latin America, these terms refer to people who reside in a geographically defined area, identifying with their place and sharing an interest in the betterment of their place (Hordijk 2000) .

Collective action and participation in developing countries also implies a political dimension as Choguill (1996:586) affirms. She argues in underdeveloped countries there are two main objectives for community involvement and participation: one is to build or upgrade, by mutual-help, physical or social infrastructure or houses in their neighbourhood; the other is to influence decisions in the political arena. She argues that models of community participation such as Arnstein's ladder or citizen participation, although adequate for analysis in developed countries, provide misleading results within a developing context. Choguill proposes a ladder for underdeveloped countries based on the degree of the external institutional involvement in terms of facilitating/carrying out community mutual-help projects. These levels of involvement are arranged on the ladder as: empowerment, partnership, conciliation, dissimulation, diplomacy, informing, conspiracy and self-management. Empowerment and self-management are at the opposite extremes of the ladder and demonstrate that basic needs can be achieved with or without governmental support (Choguill 1996:585).

Empowerment is the essential tool needed to carry out change in an underdeveloped context. Embedded in this term is the belief that local people have or could have the ability to be their own agents for change. For Friedmann, empowerment, places the emphasis on autonomy in the decision-making of territorially organized communities, local self-reliance, direct democracy, and experimental social learning (Friedmann 1992:vii). Similarly Row (Roe 2000:59) argues that empowerment is commonly used to describe how communities are provided with the ability to take decisions concerning their own lifestyles and environment. Row puts the term empowerment within the 'structure of a decision making system' this could be interpreted as part of the formal planning structure which provides citizens with the ability to change things. In contrast, in Latin America, empowerment commonly comes from the bottom of the community from 'people's decision making system'. The perception of their

capability to influence and make choices about the way people live emerges from the community itself. In the Latin American context, people empower themselves, in this way empowerment emerges from '*conscientisacion*'⁵ (consciousness) a term that refers to learning to perceive social, political and economic constraints and to take action against oppressive elements of the reality (Abbott 1996:81). This *conscientisacion* process is influenced by external actors who represent an integral part of the empowerment process in helping people to place themselves in a social, political and economic context (Abbott 1996:96).

Community participation, collective action and people's association for development is also a turbulent process. Conflicts among neighbours, competitions for power and contesting attitudes also emerge as Beall points out:

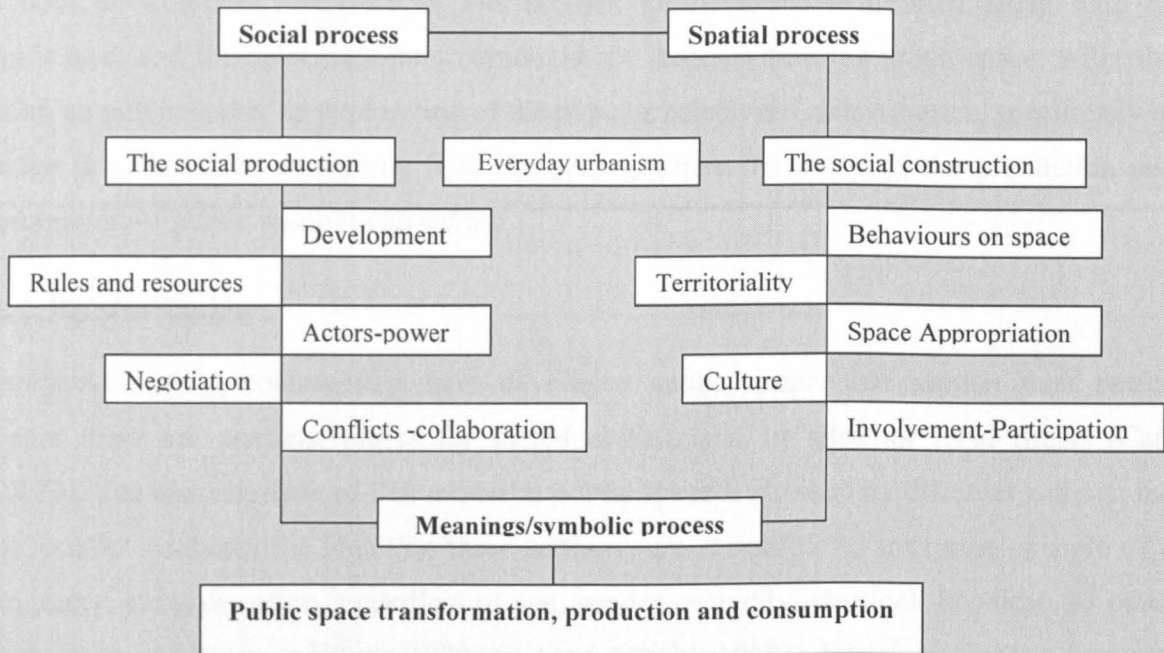
"In these urban spaces social identities collide, collude and accommodate each other. Social relations are built and challenged and social divisions occur while political coalitions and organizational linkages emerge and fade. Struggles for survival and power are played out in physical spaces and built environments that are spatial and organisational expression of social relations and contesting realities" (Beall 1997:3).

A behavioural approach to the study of public space in popular environments is essential as it takes into account the fact that inhabitants play an important role in shaping their own environment. From the approach that has been put forth, different key issues arise in relation to how public space is transformed, produced and consumed in terms of how inhabitants and other actors territorialize, appropriate, personalise public spaces in the colonias of Xalapa. Further the term 'culture' has been introduced and raises questions about how culture 'the way of doing things' influence the way processes occur, the way actors perceive their public space, and how this influences collective action and participation in order to transform public space. The key concepts of this theoretical framework discussed so far are summarised in the following box.(Figure 2.1)

⁵ For more information about empowerment/conscientisacion and how this process develops in Latin America see Abbott, J. (1996).

Figure 2.1:

Theoretical and conceptual framework to study public space transformation



A social-spatial-symbolic process

-The social process involves what happens in the arena of the planning and development process where the different actors interact, negotiate, and achieve objectives according to their rules, power and resources available. These processes will be coloured by conflict during the negotiations, yet eventually collaboration is reached.

-The spatial process involves what happens on the physical setting. It takes place in parallel with the social process. Apart from a social interaction, there is a man-environment interaction producing and constructing space, that is to say producing it through human behaviours in which people territorialize, identify with and appropriate their space and get involved with others to transform it.

-These processes of space transformation represent different meanings to those involved. This leads to the space of meanings and symbolism.

-Eventually all these process give place to the everyday production and consumption of public space.

2.5 Perspectives into Public Space

In the previous section the theoretical and conceptual framework for the study of the production and consumption of the built environment was defined. Public spaces are part of the built environment, therefore in this section; public space is defined along with its significance, and the most important contemporary issues within the urban space. After the section on public space, an exploration of the popular habitat in Latin America, specifically in Mexico is undertaken, examining it as the setting where the study of the production and consumption of public space is carried out.

2.5.1 Public Space

Throughout history, communities have developed public spaces that support their needs, whether these are markets, places for sacred celebrations, or sites for local rituals (Carr 1992:23). The characteristic of free access in public space is stressed by different authors, the term 'public' connotes the idea that these settings are accessible to everyone –people of a community, state, or nation, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, physical handicap, or other characteristics (Altman and Zube 1989; Light and Smith 1998). However 'public' does not necessarily relate to ownership, but rather to use. Some privately owned places and spaces are accessible to the public and some publicly owned areas are not (Altman and Zube 1989:1; Lynch, 1990). For Carmona the public realm has physical (space) and social (activity) dimensions (Carmona 2003:109). In this sense, public spaces are the settings where public life takes place which involves relatively open and universal contexts, in contrast to private life, which is intimate, familiar, shielded, controlled by the individual and shared only with family and friends (Loukaitou-Sideris 1988:6). Loukaitou-Sideris et al. (1988) define public space as the settings of public life which ideally function as a forum for political action and representation; as a 'neutral' or common ground for social interaction, intermingling, and communication; and as a stage for social learning, personal development and information exchange (Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee, 1998 cited in Carmona 2003). They are spaces in which citizens gather to form themselves as a public group and where a community acquires a sense of itself (Light and Smith 1998:3). Public spaces often come to symbolise the community and the larger society or culture in which it exists. Specific places acquire meanings through their functions, further deepening their roles in people's lives (Carr 1992:23). As physical entities, for Bassand and Zept (2000:58) public spaces are one of the important elements in staging urban life. More than this, they are one of the elements that

constitute the urban. Similarly for Tibbalds, the public space is the most important part of our towns and cities. It is where the greatest amount of human contact and interaction takes place. It includes all parts of the urban fabric to which the public has visual and physical access. Thus it extends from the streets, parks and squares of a town or city into the buildings which enclose and line them (Tibbalds 1992).

Madanipour, drawing on an analysis within broad frameworks of state and society, considers space as public if it is controlled by the public authorities, concerns the people as a whole, is open or available to the public, and is used or shared by all the members of a community. He recognizes that this is a very general definition, and that each section can represent a wide range of possible conditions for example public authorities may or may not legitimately represent or serve a community; availability of space may be based on a diverse and complex set of rules and conditions; all members of a community may or may not be willing or able to use a particular space for functional, symbolic, or other reasons (Madanipour 2003:112). Furthermore, Madanipour argues that a more accurate definition of public space, however, may be based on the observation that public spaces of cities, almost anywhere and at any time, have been places outside boundaries of individual or small group control, mediating between private spaces and used for a variety of often overlapping functional and symbolic purposes (Madanipour 2003:112). Public spaces appeared in a number of forms under different names and have evolved throughout history in various civilisations. By being social, economic, and political centres of cities, they have contributed to a wide range of roles in human life from physical to psychological, social, political, economic and symbolic levels (Akkar 2003:8-13). Physically public spaces are urban generators, components, and communication channels with morphological and aesthetic values. Psychologically they contribute to mental health, human and educational development. Socially they serve as community binder, promote culture, and provide social contact and interaction. Public spaces can also serve politically as arenas for conflict, political action and movements, and negotiation of conflicts. They play an economic role as settings for commercial exchange, and as medium for attracting investment; and symbolically public spaces act as creators of collective identity and meanings in the neighbourhood, city or country level (Akkar 2003).

2.5.2 Contemporary constraints on public space

Various analysts have examined the different aspects that constrain contemporary public space in cities. Richard Sennett (1994) proclaims the death of truly public space and the

triumph of modern individualism and the loss of confidence in public and community experiences, which is manifested through the increasing social apathy towards public life in the contemporary urban societies. Similarly Loukaitou-Sideris (1988:7) argues that public life has become spatially disjointed, dispersed, and discontinuous. The educational, informative and communicative character of public has also weakened. Some of the functions have migrated largely into the private sphere. Boyer (1996:9) suggests that the 'public' has become a negative concept, in contrast to the 'private' which has been refurbished with an exalted 'image'. This has contributed to a decline of public life in which public space has become 'empty space, a space of abstract freedom but no enduring human connection' (Sennett 1994:375).

Many analysts, drawing widely from European and American urban environments, argue that the modern city offers an increasingly inhospitable environment for the widespread enjoyment of and use of public space. Çelik (1994) argues that in some parts of the world streets no longer seems to be a viable social and cultural space. She affirms that there has been a disengagement from the city because it is a place of uncontrollable diversity (Çelik, Favro et al. 1994). Similarly, Valentine (2001:199) points out that 'the public realm, rather than being a social order of civility, sociality and tolerance, has increasingly become one of apprehension and insecurity'. Fear of crime is closely associated with perceptions of who occupies and controls the space of the street, and with disorderly environments. Fear of crime is leading people to avoid public space and a spiral of avoidance and abandonment is setting in (Valentine 2001:178; Porta 1996:144).

Ford states that new transport and communication technologies have also constrained urban public spaces. In most traditional cities before common use of vehicles, the street was an extension of the buildings that faced it. People sat in chairs in front of their homes, and businesses displayed goods on rugs and tables in the street. With the rise of horse-drawn and then motorized vehicles, the street became less a part of the community and more of a place for transient strangers, and people passing through⁶ (Ford 2000:6-7). Nowadays, public spaces have often become residual spaces, used for parking cars, or at best associated with particular limited functions, such as tourism and retail (Çelik, Favro et al. 1994; Madanipour 2003a).

⁶ Similarly Sennett argues 'public spaces become a function of motion, it loses any independent experiential meaning of its own' (Sennett 2002:344).

Moreover, Madanipour (1999, 2003a) argues that the growing size of the city has led to a specialization of space, which has dismantled the symbolic and functional coherence of both public and private spheres. Çelik also argues that the creation of a new pseudo public realm, civic values such as the streets as spaces for community have disappeared. Furthermore a disconnection between private and public space in these pseudo-public spaces such as the fortified shopping mall has contributed to the decline of public space significance (Çelik, Favro et al. 1994). Similarly, Crawford (1992:17) argues that bazaars and marketplaces have been exchanged for the window shopping idea in a shopping mall, where the shopper has been converted into the passive spectator, isolated individual, and silently contemplating merchandise. In this way the increasing intervention of the private sector in public space production has contributed to the privatization of space, and now public space is treated as a mere commodity (Loukaitou-Sideris 1988; Madanipour 2003a; Burgers 2000). This situation has led to the reduction of their 'publicness' and the emergence of a shifting process from being somewhat 'open' to somewhat 'closed' (Davis 1990; Gulick 1998; Mitchell 1995; Sorkin 1992). Sorkin (1992:xi) regards this as the emergence of a new kind of city, a city without a place attached to it, where a disaggregated patchwork of fabric forms a bland, senseless urban environment.

In contrast to these arguments which are mainly drawn from cities in the northern hemisphere, regarding the present situation of public life and spaces in the Latin American city, Segre (2002) argues that despite the adoption of habits and imported models by the minority elite, people's everyday life and recreational activities in the continent and the Caribbean continues to be concentrated in public open spaces. The majority of Latin Americans still wish to experience the city rather than retreating to isolated shopping malls. Parks, plazas, and promenades constitute spaces for encounter and social value in opposition to the individualist city of the elite (e.g. gated urbanizations and shopping malls). In contrast to those who argue about the exalted image of the private, in Latin America people claim the need for a more outdoors public life, as demonstrated in a research carried out by the United Nations Development Program-Chile 2000 (UN 2000) in which the demand of the population for public spaces was expressed. This investigation makes evident the aspirations of the community to have and enjoy public spaces to encounter and interact as one city's inhabitant states: *"we need a city allowing its inhabitants to go out, and have a life somehow more outdoors, of social encounter on the streets."*

2.5.3 Public space roles and dimensions

a) Urban form generator

Public space has been studied in the field of architecture and urban design as a component and generator of urban form. These analyses of public space morphology belong to the first perspective in the study of the urban space which see the city as a collection of artefacts: buildings, roads, streets, and other material objects (Madanipour 2000). As physical elements, with form and aesthetics, public spaces have been described as city components located between buildings, and making up the public city-network integrated by streets, alleys, squares, plazas, parks and green areas as elements of the urban environment. The focus of these studies is their morphology, typology and aesthetic characteristics (e.g. Sitte 1979; Ellis 1978; Krier 1979; Kostof and Castillo 1992; Moughtin 1992). For example, Krier sees public space as the alphabet with which to read and design urban space. He defines the squares as the result of a group of buildings surrounding a courtyard. The street organizes, distributes and gives access to the individual plots (Krier 1979). Another pioneer in the study of public space and its morphology is Zucker in *Town and Square* (1959) who discusses 'artistically relevant' squares, identifying different types of squares according to their shape, relation to buildings form, and relation to other squares (Carmona 2003:144). For Lynch, public spaces are focal points in the city, nodes and landmarks through which we circulate in the city, and its functions are expressions of the city form (Lynch 1960). He suggests that they are elements which are effective in visibly explaining the organization and nature of the city environment. City areas may be given recognizable and unique character by the design of the open spaces scattered through them (Lynch 1990:406). People rely on them for such daily activities as travel, shopping and interaction with friends and relatives (Francis 1991; Moudon 1991). Moughtin (1992) also studies public space and defines the street and square as follows: *A square or plaza is both an area framed by buildings and is designed to exhibit its buildings to the greatest advantage* (1992:87). *The street is an enclosed, three dimensional space between two lines of adjacent buildings* (1992:129).

In this way he studies different European streets and squares in terms of architectural and urban design principles stressing their morphological, monumental, decorative and beautifying character. Moughtin also argues: *The square is the most important element of city design; it is the chief method by which a town or city is both decorated and given distinction.*

It is the natural setting for the most important civic buildings, a place for fine sculpture, fountains and lighting (1992:123).

In contrast to most authors who have concentrated on monumental spaces, Ford (2000) studied ordinary public space rather than monumental ones. He defines public space as more than the open space found in parks, squares, and gardens. He uses the term comprehensively to include all kinds of spaces between and immediately around buildings both at ground level and upper stories. He also includes building 'skins' in his definition, since space in the city is often defined and given character by the look of the building facades that surround it (Ford 2000:28). Ford examines the role of stoops, porches, stairs, gates, patios, decks, pavements, and streets as items occupying the zone of public-private interaction between individual buildings and the public space beyond.

In Mexico, there have also been contributions to this view of public space. These are authors do not really approach public space as such, rather they refer to open and external space. Garcia Ramos (1968, 1983) (an urban designer following CIAM approaches) defines the street as a consequence of the subdivision of plots. Further, Schjetnan (1984) (another urban designer) refers to public space as 'open urban space' and defines it as the space between buildings which is contained by the floors and the facades of buildings. This space is open, with a public character accessible to everybody. Schjetnan identifies open urban spaces as the streets, plazas and parks. Another Mexican author, Guzman Rios (1988:18-19) defines 'open space' as any external three-dimensional area (public or private) which defines any interior built space which at the same time delimitates the public. This would be the places where people individually or collectively can carry out diverse activities, mainly communication, interchange, grouping and being. He identifies open space as including paths, atriums, gardens, terrace roofs, patios, plazas, hallways, and other remaining spaces.

b) Public space as a social binder

Cities exist for processes of communication and exchange between people – that is the only reason for having them in the first place; and public space is a key medium through which these processes take place (Bentley 1999:14).

Most authors have referred to the social significance of public spaces as containers of public life, and social interaction, contact, mingling and promoters of sense of community (Lynch 1990; Gehl 1987; Loukaitou-Sideris 1988; Carr 1992; Borja 2003; Carmona 2003). The public

spaces of the city have been considered as one of its assets, a social capital that can be used in the social integration of its residents (Madanipour 2003:221). In this way, through public space people feel connected to the larger social system (Alexander 1977). Carr defines public space in terms of its social dimension as:

“The stage upon which the drama of communal life unfolds. The streets, squares and parks of a city give form to the ebb and flow of human exchange. It is the common ground where people carry out the functional and ritual activities that bind a community, whether in the normal routines of daily life or in periodic festivities” (Carr et al. 1992:3).

For Walzer (1986) the public space of the city it is where one shares with strangers, people who are not relatives, friends, or work associates; it is the space of coexistence and impersonal encounters. Similarly, Worpole (2000) argues that the public realm is also a realm where different social relationships are developed, separate from the family or from institutional life. Strangers talk to each other on park benches, ask for directions, enjoy being one of the crowd and assume for the most part the goodwill and trust of others (Worpole 2000:44).

Regarding the public space of neighbourhoods, Gehl (1987) affirms that it is a setting for making and maintaining contacts, and developing friendship with fewer demands and in more relaxed way, through the spontaneous meeting in the neighbourhood with neighbours and children. In this way life between buildings is an informer about the social environment (Gehl 1987). Francis (1991:23) argues that much social life and learning occurs along the streets. In this sense, during different stages in the life cycle, spaces assume a particular importance as a setting for interaction with friends (Carr 1992:121). In the Latin American context Segovia (2000) affirms that public space constitutes a basic component to encourage solidarity and allow the actions and events that lead to a decent and mutual social life. The uses, traditions and everyday and sporadic events taking place in public spaces are an excellent thermometer to determine the degree of social integration and sense of belonging in a neighbourhood, district, or city (Segovia 2000, 2000a). Finally, in the Mexican context, within the norms for urban development, the Secretary of Urban Development and Ecology considers public spaces as essential for community development as they favour communication, exchange and social integration (SEDUE, 1995).

c) Politics and democratic arena

In terms of sites of public protest, as well as celebration, communication, conversation and everyday interaction, public space has traditionally been (and can ideally be) associated with political values which are seen as a substantial part of the public sphere (McInroy 2000:25).

It is impossible to understand public life and the spaces in which it takes place without recognizing the political nature of public activities. It is in the public space that political struggles and democratic actions become visible (Carr 1992:46). Public space has been examined as a setting of politics and democracy, where people can exercise rights, (e.g. communication, access, protest and demonstration) and participate in the public sphere. Therefore, public space is inherently democratic (Carr 1992; Zukin 1995). It represents the material location where all the political activities of all members of the 'public' occur (Mitchell 1995). It occupies an important ideological position in democratic societies. The notion of urban public space can be traced back to the Greek agora and its function as the place of citizenship, and an open space where public affairs and legal disputes were conducted. It was also a marketplace, a place of pleasurable jostling, where citizen's bodies, words, actions, and produce were all literally in mutual display, where judgements, decisions, and bargains were made (Hartley 1992: 29-30 cited in Mitchell 1995). As a political stage the public realm involves and symbolises activities important to 'citizenship' and the existence of a civil society (Borja 2003; Carmona 2003:109). Similarly, Worpole (2000) argues that public space is the essential physical setting for a civil democracy, and therefore it has great symbolic political, as well as practical, value. The right to free assembly, to walk the streets in safety without undue interference by authority, have been hard-won freedoms (Worpole 2000:43). Therefore, it represents a democratic conquest (Borja 2003). Mitchell recognizes that the struggles to maintain public spaces are also part of politics and these are found in the parks, plazas, streets and sidewalks of our cities and towns, and these struggles are fought by acts of ordinary people in the everyday spaces in which we live (Mitchell 1995; Cope 1996). Hence public space is always a space of conflict. It is a struggle over who controls it and who has access to it, who determines its constitution and how it is reproduced (Deusen 2002:150). This means that public spaces increasingly become sites of resistance, contestation and conflict, and a site in which new powers are expressed (Dugeny 2002).

Most of these authors draw on the conceptions developed by Hannah Arendt (1958, 1987) and Jurgen Habermas (1989), who, from a political perspective, have theorised the public sphere of the society. Arendt and Habermas use the term of 'public realm' to refer to an activity of communication. Arendt conceived the city as a 'polis', a self-governing political community whose citizens deliberate, debate and resolve issues (Ellin 1999:126). It is a place where humans get together, work and discussed life issues in a public arena of freedom and democracy (Calhoun 1992). Arendt saw the public realm as a place where diverse groups of people engage in debate and oppositional struggle. It provides a space for speech, as the right of everybody to express themselves 'equal rights of discourse'(in Sennett 2000). Further, Arendt defines public space as the notion of freedom of communication. Similarly, for Habermas the concept of the public sphere relates to the discussion of public affairs. The public realm is the sphere of freedom and equality of expression. Actors in the political arena or elsewhere discuss and confront ideas, values, and public policy propositions and in so doing, they constitute a public space lasting a given length of time (Bassand and Zept 2000:57). Habermas' idea of public space, is based on the 'egalitarian participation and interaction or rational citizens enabling democratization of the society' (Habermas 1990; Calhoun 1992).

d) Public space of participation

Following the previous principles of public spaces as sites of democracy and politics, it is relevant to discuss participation as a result of the political dimension of public spaces. The participatory dimension in the shaping of urban public spaces has become a very important one in most governmental agendas. In democratic and pluralistic societies, local communities are increasingly involved in the process related to public spaces and are proclaimed as integral parts of public space making and urban regeneration initiatives (Carr 1992; McInroy 2000). Through participation, those who are involved in a project are more likely to feel ownership, and therefore have some investment in ensuring that the initiative continues when the initial funding and support are not longer available (Thake 1995). In this way people develop a sense of responsibility (Oviedo 2000). Francis argues that public spaces are participatory landscapes, and that through human action, visual involvement, and the attachment of values, people are directly involved in public spaces (Francis 1989). They are also a source for inspiration for participation (Gehl 1987). Often this involvement goes further with the development of actions of improvement. Research has documented that users who develop vacant lots into community gardens and plant flowers and vegetables on sidewalks

often encourage other people to participate in the improvement and care of the rest of the street (Francis 1991:30). Direct participation in public space making can also be very significant in people's lives. The opportunity to directly manipulate material to exhibit mastery, to meet a challenge or run a risk represents a profound satisfaction to be had in proving oneself, in seeing the result of one's own efforts. These experiences are an important part of the process of growing into a human being (Lynch 1990; Francis 1991). Similarly, Woolley (2003) argues that green spaces in urban areas can provide opportunities for community involvement which in turn can help to develop a sense of self-esteem and enable individuals and communities to develop new skills (Woolley 2003:48).

In the Latin American context, Abogabir (2000) affirms that without citizen participation, public space is hardly ever built. It is essentially democratic and its use and construction is a collective task of all citizens. Its development and maintenance form part of the constant search for a fair and pleasant life. Furthermore, in the planning and design stage, public space conception requires a political debate, in which citizen participation should not be only a rhetoric, but a political and cultural debate in which all the interested parties must have the power to participate along the process of conception, production and management (Borja 2003). Since public space has a political and democratic dimension which brings about its participatory role, another important issue is the control of public space and the processes that public space making entails. Certainly, control represents an important goal of participation (Francis 1989:158). In Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation, citizen control is on the top of the ladder as the final target of the participatory processes in which power is delegated through different stages and procedures and eventually citizens get full managerial power (Arnstein 2000). Public space control will be explored in the following section.

e) Public space control

Lynch, in his theories about 'Good City Form' (1981) offers a useful starting point for defining the control of the built environment. He suggests that spatial control, or its absence, has strong psychological consequences such as contributing to anxiety, satisfaction and pride. Carr and Francis (Carr et al. 1992; Francis 1989) have used the five basic spatial rights identified by Lynch in order to study public space control. These are presence, use and action, appropriation, modification, and disposition. These rights, simply stated, assert that people should not only have access to a public space, but also freedom to use, change and even claim ownership of it, as well as to transfer their rights of use and modification to other

individuals (Lynch 1981). Similarly Jacobs and Appleyard (1996:496) argue that control of the built environment is essential for successful urban environments:

'People should feel that some part of the environment belongs to them, individually and collectively, some part for which they care and are responsible, whether they own it or not. The urban environment should be an environment that encourages people to express themselves, to become involved, to decide what they want and act on it (Jacobs and Appleyard 1996:496).

It can be seen in these ideas how the different concepts of territoriality, personalisation, appropriation, culture, perception and participation introduced earlier in the behavioural approach are essential elements to create and express control in public space. Francis defines control in public spaces as *'the ability of an individual group to gain access to utilize, influence, gain ownership over, and attach meaning to a public place'* when conflicts arise between groups or individuals with competing interest, control becomes a process through which conflicts are identified, negotiated, and resolved (Francis 1989:159). This is similar to what was discussed in the development process, where we have argued that conflict ideally leads to collaboration, which enlivens public space development process.

For Madanipour (1999:880) control of public space is essential in the power balance of any society. Control implies a sharing of power which is important in public space because it implies a sense of individual or group ownership or stewardship. When the degree of real or perceived control is limited, the amount of perceived responsibility over a place may be limited (Francis 1989). In this sense, Lynch argues that the continuity of any human society depends on good control of its living space but responsible control is also critical to the development of the individual and of the small group (Lynch 1981:220). An excessive concern with control, however, can diminish the role of other universals such as access (Ford 2000). This brings about the concept of responsibility, that those who control a place should have the motives, information, and power to do it well, a commitment to the place and to the needs of other persons and creatures in it, as well as a willingness to accept failure and to correct it (Lynch 1981:221). Good control demands skilful political energy. The price of such control is education, committees, discussions, and the tireless maintenance of political organization (Lynch 1981:216).

Control is an important issue within the analysis of the development process of public space. It is a significant matter when focussing on the power available to the actors involved in the

different stages of public space production and consumption. Different agents and actors try to dominate and impose their interests in different ways throughout the whole process. Control can include or invite people into the process or place. It can also be exclusionary, restricting opportunities for involvement or use. Therefore, issues about the control of public space arise: who controls what, what public space is for and who it serves? For example private interests in the control of public spaces affect the publicness of the space and the process that gives it place (Francis 1989:161).

f) Meaning and symbolism

“The single most important function of an element in the city is the symbolic meaning attached to it. All great civic art is in tune with the profound depths of our emotions. The great plaza, like the great building, is linked with the world of fantasy, the context of feeling” (Moughtin 1992:59).

The symbolic role of buildings and environments is a key part of the relationship between society and environment (Carmona 2003:94). Physically, just by being there, plazas, parks and recreational facilities may be ‘being used’ in communicating, status, identity, appropriate image or environmental quality. Places in the city are not only the locus of activity, but also represent meanings and belong to different groups (Rapoport 1977; Rapoport 1986:160). Public space can represent and symbolise different meanings for people. Meanings can emerge from socio-political, cultural, religious, historical, physical and aesthetic dimensions. Public spaces such as St Mark’s square in Italy, Tiananmen Plaza in Beijing or the Plaza of the Three Cultures in Mexico City represent spaces of symbolism and meaning to their respective local users, visitors and societies. Low (2000) states that public spaces retain cultural and political meanings which are symbolically encoded in their spatial relations and built environment. People, according to their experiences, memories, and knowledge about these spaces create connections and hence meaningful spaces.

Socially, the events, the experiences and the interaction that takes place in public space are a source for the construction of meaning. Public places can evoke feelings of concern, affiliation, and caring and therefore become significant to people’s lives, especially if it resounds with the memories and experiences of an individual, a family, a group, or a culture in ways that connect each one to a larger entity, or experience (Carr et al. 1992:190). Rapoport (1982) suggests that public space experiences yield meanings that accrue over time, and if these are positive they will lead to connections that go beyond the immediate

experience of a setting (Rapoport 1982). Through meanings public spaces acquired their distinctive identity in which people and space interact to develop connections. Relph (1976:33) expresses these ideas in the following way:

“The relationship between community and place is indeed a very powerful one in which each reinforces the identity of the other, and in which the landscape is a very much an expression of communally held beliefs and values and interpersonal involvements”.

In addition, public spaces often represent, communicate and embody meanings of power and dominance. They can symbolize the power of the state, as exemplified in the parades or the statues of the elite, or where the state is challenged by its opponents, as in demonstrations and revolutions (Madanipour 1999). Low argues that in the Latin American plaza, these meanings are historical as well as contemporary, and are produced by past socio-political and cultural forces and by current everyday behaviour and socio-political conflicts. In this sense, the designed landscape acts as an environmental mnemonic for communicating past and present meanings to daily users and urban residents (Low 2000). Carmona (2003) tells us that all manmade environments symbolise the power to make or change the environment. Public spaces are very often the vehicle used by local authorities to symbolise their commitment and effectiveness in urban change, improvement and regeneration (Madanipour 2003). Thus, meanings in public space are not merely subjective; the symbolic meaning is also related to the material processes that create them (Gomes 2002). Following this understanding of public space together with the theoretical framework of the social construction of the space, this thesis will explore how different meanings emerge from the processes of transformation that configure the nature of public space in the popular habitat.

g) Benefits and opportunities

Apart from their physical and architectural, social, and political dimensions, public spaces offer different practical benefits and opportunities for their users and urban residents. In the following paragraphs, the benefits that public space offers for user's health will be discussed; including the economic opportunities for urban residents and the city in general, as well as environmental benefits for the urban ecosystem.

Health benefits: body and mind: Public spaces with natural elements can relax, calm, and refresh the spirit, especially when one's daily experiences involved crowded conditions, overloaded stimulation, and stress (Carr et al. 1992). Moreover, Carr argues that public

spaces can also be responsive to different human needs such as comfort, relaxation, active and passive engagement, and discovery. Many researchers have highlighted the opportunities that public spaces offer to recover from stress, especially in those spaces where natural elements such as water, trees, and vegetation are available. These elements, together with the urban furniture, can offer the right conditions to provide relaxation for users. Active and passive engagement and recreation are considered essential for ongoing mental, spiritual and physical health (Woolley 2003). Active engagement and recreation means to involve more directly with the people and the place, for example through playing and conversation; whereas passive engagement and recreation takes place in the form of contemplation (Carr 1992; Carmona 2003; Woolley 2003). In this way public spaces represent opportunities for relaxation which is a developed state with body and mind at ease (Carr 1992:98). Therefore, public spaces can represent places of stimulus release in contrast to the intense and meaning-loaded communications encountered in the remainder of the city (Lynch 1990:397).

Stimulation is another need that can be satisfied in public spaces. Children, being deprived of stimulation, can permanently be stunted in their intellectual and social development, thus this need could be met through exploration and discovery of the social activity, as well as physical and environmental aspects, of public spaces. Moreover, public spaces can contribute to physical health with the opportunities they offer for exercise and to mental health through the restorative effects of nature (Woolley 2003; Jackson 2003). An example of this could be where public spaces motivate people to increase their physical activity such as walking, playing sports which contributes to body development for the young as much as for elderly people. Public spaces can also be very important for the encouragement of sport programmes, community programs and health programs within urban areas (Woolley 2003). Finally, in Mexico, the Secretary of Urban Development and Ecology (SEDUE 1995) also recognizes the benefits that people can get from public spaces, and affirms that public spaces contribute to the physical and mental wellbeing of individuals through rest and recreation as well as to the reproduction of energy to work.

Economic benefits and opportunities: Throughout history public spaces have been always the arena for economic exchange. In most culture commercial activities in public spaces take place in the form of street markets, festivals, and so on (Carr et al. 1992). An economically healthy public space is that one where businesses and land values prosper, and where abandonment, vacant lots, and disinvestment is discouraged (Francis 1991). Public spaces

contribute to the impact of property values, increase employment opportunities, and attract tourism. This is seen in the impact on property values; it has been reported that the value of subdivided land adjacent to a park or other open space is higher than land further away from such amenities (Woolley 2003:47). Public spaces also offer employment opportunities since they have to be managed and maintained which involves the work of different agents (design, construction, and maintenance) (Woolley 2003). Madanipour states that the role of public space improvement and creation, as a medium of city regeneration in cities, attracts tourism, new investment, and businesses into cities (Madanipour 1999). It is not enough to have a number of impressive buildings and entertaining activities in a city, the public spaces which connect these buildings and activities are also important in the decisions of tourists (Madanipour 2003:226). In this sense, through these urban interventions, cities position themselves in the global market, where public spaces are important vehicles through which a city can compete. Moreover, some urban spaces have afforded economic benefits in opportunities for community commitment as an integral part of successful neighbourhood regeneration schemes. These successful schemes have brought about regeneration benefits in the form of the creation of jobs, and in addition, new businesses have been set up in these areas (Woolley 2003).

Environmental Benefits: Public spaces also provide environmental benefits to cities. Open spaces and the elements within them, particularly trees, can have a beneficial impact on the climate and microclimate of the urban space (Woolley 2003). They are helpful in balancing climate, airflow, air pollution, temperature, humidity and precipitation. Such benefits include the accumulation and extraction from the atmosphere of airborne pollutants, the fixing of carbon from the air, the cooling of the raised urban temperature, the provision of shade, wind reduction, a decrease in noise and the reduction of energy consumption in buildings (Woolley 2003:42). As well as providing climatic improvements, public spaces can also provide opportunities for wildlife habitats. Such habitats are important, not only for the intrinsic value they have in providing a habitat for living things, but also for the opportunities they provide for people to have daily contact with nature in the urban context (Woolley 2003:36). Another important issue that Woolley points out is that the environmental benefits are available to both those who use the spaces and those who do not use the spaces; not just to any one section of society or any one individual or group using a public open space. This is the ultimate in social inclusion: the environmental benefits of urban open spaces are there for all, whatever their social class, creed, ethnic background or gender.

Public space plays significant roles within the urban environment. We have highlighted its physical, social, political, and symbolic roles; moreover we have identified the main benefits and opportunities that this represents for urban inhabitants. The concepts introduced about public space raise the questions: How are the different roles, benefits and opportunities identified by urban theoreticians reflected in the transformation of public spaces in the popular habitat? Are popular inhabitants and different actors aware the importance of public space? And if it is important how do these perceptions influence public space interventions? These are the key concerns of the research which will be addressed later in next chapters. Firstly the main characteristics of popular urban environments will be introduced.

2.6 The Urban Popular Habitat

In this section the context in which the dynamics of public space transformation take place will be explored. In the following pages, the main aspects that have given place to the popular habitat in Latin America with a special reference to Mexico will be described.

2.6.1 The growth of the city

Latin American cities share similar processes of growth and urbanization. Urban settlements from the pre-Hispanic times, to the colonial period, and later on throughout the 20th century have developed through similar patterns of growth, determined by a massive rural-urban migration and high birth rates. In 1900, most Latin Americans lived in the countryside and only three cities had more than half a million inhabitants. By 1930, the total urban population of the whole region had still not reached 20 million. However Latin American cities underwent rapid urbanisation and industrialisation in the post-war period (Gilbert 1996). By the 1950's there were still only six cities with more than a million people (Buenos Aires, Lima, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Santiago and Sao Paolo) (Gilbert, 1996). But by 1980 over half the population was urban (Potter and Lloyd-Evans 1998). At the beginning of the 1990's the urban population in Latin America represented the 72% of the total of the population (Gilbert 1996:26). In 2000, the urban population reached 75%. This meant 380 millions live in cities and 127 millions still in the rural areas (CEPAL 2000). Cities could absorb this flood of immigrants due to their economic growth. While jobs were always scarce,

the absolute increase in urban employment was impressive⁷. Despite the fast rate of urban growth, the population was kept relatively healthy, if living conditions were often squalid, they were not worse than conditions in the countryside (Gilbert 1996:28-29). Rapid urbanization of the region has also given rise to similar urban landscapes, with the development of low-income peripheral settlements in which the poverty, segregation and inequality are the main characteristics. Gilbert (1996) argues that the urban sprawl has produced almost identical suburbs, so that it is difficult to tell either the shanty towns or the high-income residential areas in one city from those in another.

2.6.2 Migration

John Turner (1968) offered a model to explain low-income migration⁸ patterns in Latin American cities, arguing that most low-income immigrants would live first as renters in the inner city and later move as owners to the peripheral low-income settlements. According to John Turner's model, residential location would be determined by three factors: 1) tenure, specifically the choice between renting and ownership, 2) Location, i.e. proximity to unskilled employment opportunities mainly located in the centre city, 3) Shelter, i.e. an individual's priority for modern standard shelter. Later on gradual integration into employment, and growing family size, would affect these priorities. The migrant is now in the position to become a 'consolidator'; an (illegal) owner in the periphery. By the end of the 1960s this model was widely accepted, however in the 1970s there was growing evidence challenging the model. Ward argues that although many residents of peripheral, illegal settlements during the 1940s and 1950s had begun their urban lives in inner city tenements, a substantial proportion had not, but had moved direct to the periphery by renting or sharing lots with relatives and friends in the intermediate ring or current periphery (Ward 1998:68).

2.6.3 The city structure

The similar patterns of urban growth and migration gave rise to similar urban forms in most Latin American cities. Griffin and Ford (1980) proposed a model of the Latin American city that seeks to combine traditional urban forms (the colonial city, old barrios) with the effects of the modernizing process and urban growth (new business districts, upper-middle income

⁷ In Mexico City, the number of industrial jobs grew from 271,000 in 1950 to 477,000 in 1960 and 698,00 in 1970. Commerce and finance expanded enormously, which brought about the creation of a whole range of new jobs such as shop assistants, street vendors, bank clerks and insurance workers.

⁸ In the Mexican context, Cornelius (1973, 1980) studied rural-urban migration in Mexico City. He advocated for peripheral settlements as feasible areas to allocate the migrants. He argued that peripheral settlements represented the way to integrate them into the urban environment.

housing developments, suburbanization, malls, industrial areas, and low income peripheral developments). According to Griffin and Ford (1980) the dominant characteristic of the Latin American city is a prominent commercial spine/sector which extends out from the CBD (commercial business district), and which houses the city's most important economic, social and cultural amenities and a substantial proportion of high-income and well serviced residences (Figure 2.2). This is the location of residential areas, and facilities such as hotels, theatres, restaurants, prestigious offices, private hospitals, museums. It is also near to a tree-lined boulevard, which according to Griffin and Ford is present in nearly all Latin American cities (Potter and Lloyd-Evans 1998).

In Ford's updated model of the Latin American city, he includes the industrial sector of the city, often following the line of a railway of highway, that culminates in a suburban industrial park that accommodates factories and warehouses (Ford 1996). He also includes the *periferico*, this a ring road that connects the mall and the industrial areas (Pacione 2001:448). Away from the spine, there is a series of concentric zones. Here socio-economic levels and housing quality decrease with distances from the city centre. Three distinctive zones can be identified: a zone of maturity, a zone of in situ accretion, and a zone of peripheral squatter settlements (Potter and Lloyd-Evans 1998:129).

The Zone of Maturity is an area of better quality residences comprising filtered-down former elite dwellings, and self-built housing that has been gradually upgraded over time by residents who are unable to participate in the housing market of the elite residential sector. These residential areas are also likely to be fully serviced with paved streets, lighting, sewage schools and public transportation. In many cities old colonial residences around the *zocalo* (plaza) have suffered from lack of investment as the wealthy have moved along the spine, leaving such dwellings to become rented apartments. As in western cities part of this zone may be undergoing gentrification through governmental programs (Pacione 2001). This area is where the main colonial plaza, important governmental

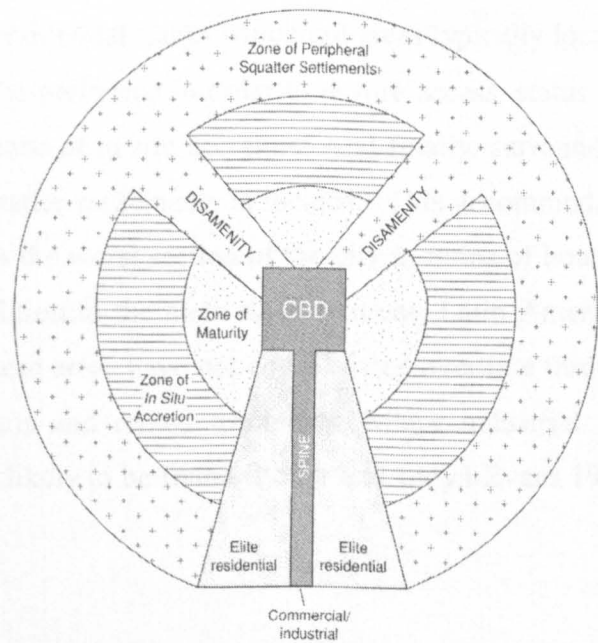


Figure 2.2 The Latin American city (Adapted from Griffin and Ford, 1980) (In Potter and Lloyd-Evans 1998:129).

buildings, and most important jewels of colonial and 19th century architecture are located. The Zone of in situ accretion is characterised by a variety of housing types, sizes and quality, and many houses have unfinished rooms and second storeys. Some districts are 'completed' and similar to the zone of maturity, while others are 'under development', either by self-builders or by government-sponsored housing projects. They are often next to commercial and informal economic activity centres. Provision of services can vary from one street to street. Although Griffin and Ford argue that this zone would gradually improve over time, the rate of change will depend on the health of the national economy, which determines the city's ability to provide infrastructure, and the economic prospect of its residents (Pacione 2001). Griffin and Ford also identify middle-class residential tracks which are areas typically located as close as possible to the elite sector and the *periferico* in order to ensure access, status and protection. This can also be located in the zone of in situ accretion. And finally, surrounding these other parts the Zone of peripheral squatter settlements is located. This accommodates the impoverished migrants to the city, and is the worst section of the city in terms of housing quality and public service provision. In addition to the main squatter areas, Latin American cities also contain sectors of *disamenity*. These areas have not consolidated overtime through in situ accretion and remain areas of slums and rented tenements. Major industrial and environmentally polluting activities are also likely to be found (Potter and Lloyd-Evans 1998; Pacione 2001) (Figure 2.2).

2.6.4 The Popular Habitat

Following the model of Griffin and Ford, the popular habitat is located in the zone of in situ accretion and the zone of peripheral squatter settlements as a result of the massive growth of cities. The urban environment is unfinished, there are still unpaved roads, some areas are very well consolidated with all services (water, drainage, electricity) and some other areas are not. There are big contrasts and different levels of consolidation from one house to another and from one street to another. Further out the zone of squatter settlements is found where the poorest groups of the society live, characterized by self-help urbanization, and a lack of services. It is the area where individuals have settled without legal title to land, or alternatively, without planning permission (Potter and Lloyd-Evans 1998:139).

a) Housing

The main characteristic of the popular habitat is that it has been produced through self-help or autoconstruction which means that residents have taken responsibility for building their own

houses (Potter and Lloyd-Evans 1998), as well as for the provision of services and facilities (Coulomb 1991). In this way, popular settlements are gradually transformed from ramshackle structures into consolidated neighbourhoods. In terms of housing, some families proceed much faster than others. The critical ingredient for improving a house is money both to buy materials and to hire labour (Gilbert 1996:88). Self-help strategies to improve housing are often combined with the hiring of construction labour, especially for the last stages of consolidation⁹ in which permanent materials are used (Schteingart 1989; Kellett 1995; Duhau and Schteingart 1997). Where the process of consolidation is working well, amazingly speedy transformation take place. Gradually what began as a sea of shanties becomes a consolidated settlement. Electricity and water are installed, the roads are paved, bus services begin operating and schools are built (Gilbert 1996:90).

This form of urban production is usually the result of the lack of opportunities of the poorest groups of the city to satisfy their needs of housing within the formal real estate and property market. The land has mainly been acquired through 'invasion', or bought through illegal¹⁰ and informal procedures. In this way low-income urban dwellers and new rural migrants have satisfied their urban housing needs by settling on the peripheral areas of the city. The typical patterns of this process of urban production have been recognized and studied by several urban researchers who have called it 'popular urbanization', 'popular habitat', 'unplanned, informal, irregular, spontaneous, or peripheral settlements'. In the Mexican context these settlements have been called 'colonias populares' and this is where the majority of the population has found a place to house themselves in most Mexican cities¹¹ (Duhau and Schteingart 1997). Rapid expansion of these neighbourhoods occurred during the 1950s and 1960s since which time the pace of formation has slowed. For example, an estimated 50-60 per cent of Mexico city's population live in settlements which began through one or other of these land-alienation processes, although *post hoc* legalization and servicing combine with on-site dwelling consolidation and improvement, and have often dramatically changed the legal and physical status of these neighbourhoods. Those settlements established in the early

⁹ See Kellett (1995) and Klaufus (2001) for more information about housing consolidation processes in popular settlements. There are studies which also recognized the aesthetics and the architectural dimension of self-help housing for example Rapoport (1988) who has been a strong advocate for spontaneous settlements as vernacular design. He draws attention to their specific and varied creations of living environments. Often the settlements are localised in relationship to culture, to environmental change, and to the sharing of knowledge about design and construction. This often gives settlement characteristics of colour, adaptability, and space for rituals and festivals. The terminology used by Rapoport expresses his viewpoint in every sense. He sees spontaneous settlements as open-ended for added elements, as multi sensory, as semi fixed, and an expression from which designers and planners can learn (in Pugh, 2000).

¹⁰ Pérez and Bolívar (1998) have examined the meaning of illegality in popular settlements. They argue that illegal is the access to the land, and illegal is the urban production because it takes place outside of the planning framework.

¹¹ For example, in the last decades it has been estimated that around 60% of the housing production in Mexico city has taken place through self-help processes by "popular dwellers", basically in illegal settlements (Duhau, E. and M. Schteingart 1997).

period of expansion have long since been engulfed and incorporated to form the spatial intermediate ring of the city, and their densities have increased (Ward 1998:66) .

b) Services and infrastructure

Obtaining services is a real struggle. In many cities, it requires insistent petitioning by settlement leaders. They must constantly visit the offices of public officials, councillors and political allies to remind them of the settlements' continued existence and the seriousness of its needs. Sometimes petitioning does not work and the authorities ignore the community. The most common reaction to this neglect is simply to organise a mass visit to the government offices (Gilbert 1996:92-93). In most cases popular dwellers have also taken responsibility for the provision of services. At the earlier stages of settlement consolidation dwellers have worked communally to create provisional networks of water and electricity. Initially, a community may steal what it needs. Tapping into the water lines is a regular practice and linking a transformer to the electricity main is an easy task for a local electrician (Gilbert 1996:90). However, there are also significant examples in which the popular inhabitants have managed to develop communal solutions, with the technical assistance of non governmental organizations and universities satisfying their service needs (Coulomb 1991; Moctezuma Barragan 1999). In Mexico, some researchers argue that there is not sufficient research about services and/or urban facilities and self-help practices. For example, Coulomb (1991) points out that a very limited conceptualization exists about the popular habitat, which also includes services and urban facilities. He argues that most analysis around people's participation in the processes of popular urbanization have been highly concentrated on the self-help processes related to housing (Coulomb 1991).

2.6.5 Popular urbanization responses

Different approaches to deal with the creation of popular populares have been taken by governments. In general throughout the history of massive urbanization, Latin American governments have responded with different policies. The first wave of policies by most governments can be referred to as the state as a provider. Policies were characterized by programs of settlement clearing, bulldozing the shanties and replacing them with modern housing blocks, built by the state. It is now generally accepted that the standards of these early schemes were far too low (Potter and Lloyd-Evans 1998). Many schemes ended up building two few homes at standards which were beyond the resources of the poor (Gilbert 1996:97). The academic research carried out in the '60s and '70s provided clear evidence of the

unfeasibility of these projects and stressed the potential of popular settlers construction strategies. These were recognized as better solutions than the highly expensive solutions provided by the state. (e.g. John Turner¹², Charles Abrams, William Mangin). Academics argued that self-help housing was an architecture that worked. Rather than constituting slums, shanty towns represented a potential solution to the housing problems¹³. As result of this new kind of thinking, more and more governments began to upgrade rather than destroy self-help settlements so the state became a facilitator or enabler, and not a provider (Gilbert 1996; Potter and Lloyd-Evans 1998). Now a great deal of money is being spent on providing these settlements with services and infrastructure. Most governments are now mostly willing to provide legal titles to the land, sometimes even when it has been invaded. In Chile, Mexico¹⁴ and Venezuela major legalisation campaigns have been introduced during the last few years (Gilbert 1996:100).

The other major policies which have gone hand in hand with upgrading have been sites and services (and core housing). These programs involve the opening up of new land and its subdivisions into residential plots which are serviced with utilities. Alan Turner (1980:268) has commented that this term has become a generic title for a wide array of projects and has acquired an almost talismanic quality of being a cure-all for the housing problems of the poor. However these strategies proved to be rather insufficient to satisfy the massive housing needs.¹⁵ There is a great variation in such schemes, in terms of both the services provided and whether the initial stages of dwelling are provided (Potter and Lloyd-Evans 1998:156). The shelter component of such schemes can vary from no shelter at all strictly a defined site and services, to more sophisticated levels of provision. In the former case, the remnants of shanties cleared from elsewhere may be used. Where the beginning of the house is provided, this is referred to as the 'core unit'. Sometimes just the toilet or 'wet core' is provided on site. The standards of services provided can vary greatly as well (Potter and Lloyd-Evans 1998:157). In the Mexican context sites and services schemes were promoted by the inclusion in the planning law in 1983 the '*fraccionamientos de vivienda progresiva*' (progressive

¹² Turner (1969) (reprinted 2002:286) was a strong advocate of self-help housing and argued that the existential value of informal and self-help settlements is the product of three freedoms: freedom of community self-selection; freedom to budget one's own resources and the freedom to shape one's own environment.

¹³ Although there were counter arguments to this visions such as Burgess (1982) who argued that the support of self-help housing was a misunderstanding of the nature of the housing problem, an attack on living standards, a way of undermining the need to pay a proper wage to the poor, and a withdrawal from what was governments' moral duty to society.

¹⁴ In Mexico, the Commission for the regulation of land tenure (CORETT-Comision para la regulaci3n de la tenencia de la tierra) was create d in 1973. CORETT is in charge of the ejidal land legalization (Cruz-Rodriguez 2001). See also (Azuela, A. and E. Duhau 1998).

¹⁵ Hardoy (1989:272) affirms that in spite of these governmental programs, the housing production rarely satisfied the demand. During the 1960's and 1970's, even in the most active countries the production reached 3 units per year per 1000 inhabitants when the demands was superior to 10 units.

housing schemes). In which the provision of services is done gradually and self-help housing is supported by the state. This type of schemes, together with the other legal forms for the provision of the land for housing, takes place in high proportion on peripheral agricultural land (*ejidal land*) through expropriations, exchanges and other unrecognized and illegal procedures (Schteingart 1989). The Mexican case will be examined closely in the following section.

2.6.6 Colonias populares creation

Generally in Latin America, popular settlements were formed through invasion, however in the Mexican context; it has mostly taken place through the illegal subdivision of land. Thus land has been mostly acquired through buying and selling procedures, rather than *de facto* invasion, occupation and appropriation (Duhau and Schteingart 1997:30; Hardoy 1989). Land subdivisions took place on the communal agricultural land surrounding Mexican cities called '*ejidal land*'¹⁶. Even though the Mexican law prohibits the use of this land to create urban areas, between 1950 and 1970, the subdivision of this '*ejidal*' land¹⁷ was used as a mechanism to create colonias populares (Duhau and Schteingart 1997). The main motivation to subdivide ejidal land is that '*ejidatarios*' (owners) envisage better economic benefits through the subdivision and urbanization of the land rather than the agricultural production (Duhau and Schteingart 1997). The urbanization of ejidal land has not only been initiated by agrarian groups, but also by governmental programs in order to provide land for industrial development and also for the creation of new housing areas for both low-income and middle income groups of the population. Another way that Duhau et al. describe for the formation of colonias populares is the subdivision of private land which can also be called as '*irregular*'¹⁸ due to different reasons. Firstly, the subdivision may have been legally authorized but the owner starts to sell plots without introducing urban facilities and services according to the law. Another frequent case is when the owner of the land subdivides the land and sells the lots without having obtained the respective planning permission. Finally, the worst case is when an individual, pretending to be the owner of the land, subdivides it and sell the plots (Connolly 1989; Duhau and Schteingart 1997:31). Whichever mechanism is adopted, the outcome is broadly the same: unserviced plots (usually around 200m²) upon which

¹⁶ Ejidal land was created due to the expropriation of big extensions of land (Haciendas) owned by the elite groups until the first decade of the 20th century. After the Mexican Revolution, land was allocated in communal form to the agrarian groups of the country. This land surrounding urban centres later was reached by the massive urban growth.

¹⁷ For more information about the use of *ejidal land* for urbanization purposes in the Mexican context, see the work of (Varley 1985; Azuela, A. and E. Duhau 1998).

¹⁸ Perez. and Bolivar (1998).in the Venezuelan context argue that *barrios* are the product of an illegal action which involves the unauthorized occupation of unserviced plots of land in which the occupier has neither a property title nor a construction permit.

households take primary responsibility for dwelling construction and management (Ward 1998:66).

2.6.7 Urban form: a collective task

As mentioned earlier, Gilbert (1996) argued that popular settlements in Latin America are almost indistinguishable from one to another, from one city to another, and even from one country to another. Patterns of urban morphology can be also identified as a result of the land subdivisions and construction processes carried out by the different agents in the urban development process. Samuels¹⁹ (1999:129) states that we can regard urban form and development as the result of a 'pluralistic mode of design' carried out not by one master but by contributors bringing expertise to different levels. In popular environments, a pluralistic and organized mode of design and construction is evident in the settlement formation at the collective and public level (public spaces) and at the micro and private level (the dwelling). At all levels clearly established patterns of physical development and social organisation are identified. The social and cultural structure has produced urban forms which are highly ingrained on dominant models of urban form such as the grid layout, which in Latin America has prevailed since the colonial period and sometimes even overrides the logic of topography. Regarding this Kellett (2003a:403) suggests: *"The most vital aspect of the grid layout is that it will be read as conventional, and have the potential to develop and become the same as other parts of the city"*. However variations are found when professional and governmental agencies have intervened within the design process. Here different urban forms are observed where attempts to maximise density or minimise expenditure have led to variants in morphology (Kellett, 2003). Whatever the conditions of development and resulting urban form, this is the result of individuals' associations, leader's initiatives, participation and collective action. These issues will be explored in the next paragraphs.

2.6.8 Popular participation

The conformation of the popular habitat takes place through people's self-help strategies and collective participation. Popular participation has been widely promoted by local governments in Mexican cities. In the Habitat Conference (UN-Vancouver, 1976), popular participation was explicitly claimed as a crucial strategy for the betterment of popular settlements (Coulomb 1993:26). Since then, in Mexico, local governments have regularly promoted popular participation for the upgrading of settlements, and for the provision and management

¹⁹ See Samuels (1999, 2003, 2003a) for more information about the importance of morphology in urban space development.

of urban services (Moctezuma Barragan and Anaya 1997). In this sense, popular participation is about water and drainage provision, and the opening and paving of streets as well as the construction of facilities such as schools. All these are achieved through the labour of local inhabitants. This is developed through the 'half and half' formula, which means, the local government contributes the materials while residents contribute their labour. With the worsening of the Mexican economy in some cases residents also contribute with the costs of the materials (Coulomb 1993). The discourse about popular participation is that the provision of municipal services implies a very high cost. However municipalities do not have enough resources, therefore 'social participation' is required through people's economic contribution, 'voluntary' labour or the provision of materials in order to find solutions to the constraints of low-income neighbourhoods. Participation in this context is understood as an economic-resources saving strategy as well as a strategy to lighten the weight of the crisis in the management of cities (Massolo 1991).

2.6.9 Leaders: Agents of Change

Participation and the relations between community and authorities have been mediated by the existence of community 'leaders' or 'promoters'. These are individuals who are willing to initiate action, i.e. to take issues on behalf of a community to the authorities and act as representatives. A leader does not act alone, and invariably has a group around him (Desai 1996:221). Desai calls this group the 'mediator group', which consist of individuals who are willing to give their time, and sometimes, resources for communal purposes (Desai 1996). Residents seek a strong figure with leadership qualities, who can bargain with officials and politicians, and has the right contacts with influential people. The general image of the community leader is that he works hard, sacrificing his time, energy, and quite often even some of his money, in return, he has the power to make decisions (Hordijk 2000). Leaders use their position to seek social status, to gain financial benefits and, at times, realise political ambition (Desai 1996). Leaders who initiate action, improvement and take actions for the collective well being without seeking to satisfy their own agendas are good agents of change. The leader is also able to manage conflict between communities and authorities. They can legitimize the authorities to the community, by explaining to the community the lack of success in achieving help from the authorities, and they can also legitimize demands from the community to the authorities to encourage public investment and improvements in the colonia (Coulomb 1993). This relationship between authorities, leaders and the community is what is known in the processes for the improvement of low-income settlements as clientalism. It is

very much practiced by politicians and authorities in exchange for political support, and not only occurs in *colonias populares* but in general in third world urbanization processes. Leaders are also those individuals who managed to encourage collective action and community organization in the neighbourhoods.

2.6.10 Social Networks

Social networks are very important in the development of popular neighbourhoods in Latin American cities. Riaño argues that the *barrio* (popular neighbourhood) is the territory of inhabitants who have similar socio-economic constraints and needs. Life conditions and the fight for survival reinforce the cohesion of the *barrio* inhabitants. They have a series of social practices, and of networks of support that provide the basis to defend themselves from difficult socio-economic conditions (Riaño 1990:219). These are forms of social organization that belong to the cultural tradition of the 'popular sectors' (low-income population) (Riaño 1990). Social networks are the social alliances structuring everyday action. The approach of social networks is suited to ground level studies, thus allowing for an 'inside's' understanding of the city. It yields an integrated view of social organisation in the city and reveals the variety of social, cultural, economic and political practices of groups and individuals with regard to their surrounding environments (Riaño 2000:74). Social networks can be oriented towards individual and/or collective needs based on kinship, friendship, neighbourliness or common place of origin. These are important means of improving people's access to urban resources (Riaño 2000:73). They are based on the exchange of favours, on trust, and loyalty, and therefore do not have a mercantile expression (Riaño 1990:219). On the other hand, it has been noted that in urban areas the traditional communal systems of exchange are created on principles of reciprocity and redistribution and not on market relation are considerably weakened when neighbourhood continuity is degraded, land or other resources are difficult to secure. Weakening also occurs when social stratification is high or the constant involvement in the search for paid work destroys reciprocal and distributive relations (Hordijk 2000:36). However, studies²⁰ of Latin American urbanisation have revealed social networks as the key-stone of the informal production of the city. They play a central role in the improvement of physical infrastructure, are crucial for the integration of rural migrants, and are the most important resource used residents to solve problems of daily survival (Riaño 2000:74).

²⁰ In Mexico a pioneering work regarding social networks and their importance in popular urban consolidation processes is the research carried out by Lomnitz (1975).

2.6.11 Community Based Organizations

The living conditions of popular settlements are the product of the participation of individuals at the family level, public policies and collective practices of the community. In the *colonias populares* social organization plays a very important role in the improvement of the environment and in general in the different aspects that promote the well being of popular inhabitants (Ortega and Schteingart 1997). The necessity for collective action to improve the conditions at the neighbourhood level leads to the formation of neighbourhood based organisations. They are often referred to as grassroots organisations or, in the Latin American context, *organizaciones de base*. They are known as self-help groups or people's organisations (Hordijk 2000:34). Hordijk (2000) defines them as any type of organisation, formal or informal, which is based on a group of people living or working together and who associate to pursue common interest. Community-based organizations are the result of empowerment, participation and collective action, themes which have already been discussed in the chapter. Riaño (2000:74) argues that these group-centred networks (in contrast to primary networks), such as self-help groups and associations have a formalised structure, and dispose of an identifiable setting of action. They also have publicly defined cultural, economic and political aims for example seen in lobbying, defending, promoting, political alliances. In the same way, Hordijk (2000) argues that one characteristic that community based organizations share is that they comply with the requisites of being a membership organisation, with some kind of internal hierarchical structure. They also have some kind of management committee or neighbourhood council with a president, vice-president, a secretary and treasurer, and voting rights for the members during general assemblies. The first step in managing collective initiatives and organization is to empower and mobilize popular inhabitants. In this task, leaders play a crucial role in addition to the social networks within the neighbourhood.

In Mexican cities many community-based organizations work beyond their territorial limits and are linked with other *colonias*-based organisations. Together they have constituted an important movement of neighbourhood action (Ortega and Schteingart 1997). This action of political nature has been called the 'Movimiento Urbano Popular'²¹ (popular urban movement) and is the result of the association of community-based organisations of popular settlements for the negotiation, self-management, and development of actions and strategies in search of better urban living conditions. This is done either autonomously or in

²¹ The urban popular movement has been widely studied within popular urbanization studies by Mexican urban researchers. See articles published by Revista CIUDADES (Red Nacional de Investigacion Urbana A.C.) and COLMEX (Colegio de Mexico).

cooperation with the state (Navarro 1990; Ramirez 1990; Barquera 1996; Ortega and Schteingart 1997; Herrasti 1998). The demands that these movements bring forth could be about different needs. In the cases of tenants, the struggles are about eviction, increase of rents, and for better housing conditions. In the case of the *colonias populares* the struggle is about the land and services. In the case of social housing blocks, residents seek good, honest and democratic management and maintenance. The main factor of a community based organization is the collective identity which is motivated and promoted by actions of transformation, communal work over the urban space, community meetings, and even parties and religious festivities (Moctezuma Barragan 1999). However there is also a very important aspect that affects cohesion, which gives rise to fragmentation and that is, politics. Ortega et al. in their research in the *colonias* of Mexico City, point out how community-based organizations have been disintegrated due to the intromission of political parties and leader's acceptance to pursue political careers (Ortega and Schteingart 1997).

2.6.12 Culture and Identity

All these practices, 'the way of doing things' in the words of Rapoport, have also given rise to the recognition of the culture and identity of the 'popular sectors' (low-income groups). Academics have acknowledged inhabitants actions as a cultural process in which groups make use of the available resources, in which their cultures of origin, and the appropriation of new cultural elements play an important role in producing new forms of group identity (Ontiveros 1998). In this context, Walton (1984:79) defines culture as the beliefs that social groups have about themselves: how they interpret their past, comport their present, and construct their future physical and moral accommodations. Walton argues that cultures are produced by social groups in conflict. Further, culture is both a product and a determinant of class and collective action. Walton concludes with a definition that fits well to the inhabitants of 'popular sectors' in Latin America: "*culture is what we feel about our circumstance, and what we do about it –change it, make it liveable, or struggle with something between*" (Walton, 1984:92). In the popular habitat, people's ability to self-organize, and associate give place to processes of community formation, reaffirming themselves through collective identity and generating a cultural dynamics that goes beyond their territorial limits. Similar arguments have been expressed by Latin American urban researchers such as Bolivar (1990), who argues that popular neighbourhoods have created responses and particular cultural expressions. Ontiveros (1998) states that the habitat produced by popular inhabitants responds to creative participative expressions of their producers. Similarly, Solinis (1990) affirms that the different

modes of occupation, construction, planning, and conception of the built space produced by popular inhabitants, as well as their processes of socialization, are the expression of their cultural dynamics. Moreover, these spaces of life are vectors of expression directly linked to processes of attachment, territoriality and appropriation. They are also linked to the processes of resistance and adhesion to the dominant urban model in which there is a confrontation of different processes of domination-reproduction- disintegration and processes of creation-transformation of urban development (Solini 1990:20). All these different processes, with the resulting urban environment create culture. Riaño (1990: 213) concludes that the low-income neighbourhood has a strong social significance for its residences. The low income neighbourhood is the territorial basis for series of social interactions and forms of social organization which constitutes a sense of community, a sense of place, and a locus of local cultural identity (Riaño 1990). The popular culture and identity which emerges in the *colonias populares* is the result of resident's daily practices of transformation, production and consumption of the urban environment.

2.7 Conclusions

Firstly, the theoretical approach to the dynamics of public space transformation was examined. We defined an integrated approach combining the social, spatial and symbolic dimension for the study of the urban space. In this approach urban space is regarded as a process, in which the spaces produced and the people involved in the processes act in a dialectical and dialogical interaction. Processes, people and space are an integrated entity which defines the dynamics of space transformation. We also studied the different aspects related to the development process in order to understand the nature of the social production of the space. We identified that the development process depends on the rules, resources, and knowledge, social, cultural and political capital available to those involved in the social production of the space. In this way, we identified the different models of development and we also stressed the existence of models embedded in affluent societies and the existence of models embedded in a context of a developing country. We conclude that both models are combined in the Latin American popular urban production of the city. However urban production has been mainly characterised by the self-production model of the urban environment in which the local dweller directly performs the production of the city. In this way we also explored, from a behavioural perspective, the way people interact with their space through territoriality, personalisation, appropriation and participation. Therefore, in the

self-production of the city two kinds of processes take place. One is the social process of development in which actors interact, negotiate, get into conflict and may collaborate. The second is about actions and behaviours, which take place in space and which also construct and produce space. These processes are examined in relation to public space transformation that is why we also examined public space theories and concepts. The importance of public space in cities was stressed. Public space plays prominent roles in the development of the urban every day life (social, physical, political, psychological, and symbolic) and these roles have also been constrained in contemporary urban societies. Since we are aiming to study public space dynamics of transformation, production and consumption, we also needed to scrutinise the context in which these dynamics are explored. Then, we turned to examine the development of the popular habitat in Latin America. We demonstrated how the massive urban growth experienced in Latin America gave place to popular peripheral settlements, and we described different physical, social and spatial aspects in order to introduce the general context in which the dynamics of public space transformation are studied in subsequent chapters.

Having built up this theoretical and conceptual framework, it is important to stress the key themes for the study of public space transformation in the *colonias populares* in Mexico. These can be summarised as follows: urban environments are socially, spatially and symbolically produced. They are the result of the social relations which take place between the actors who interact according their rules, resources, behaviours, representations, perceptions, ways of appropriation and participation. All these factors are determined by culture. These are reflected in the way the social and spatial development processes takes place which in turn is manifested in the resulting physical environment. However, these processes take place in conflictive arenas in which power, interests and aspirations play a significant role, because actors seek to satisfy their own interests and dominate space transformation. On the other hand this conflictive nature can enrich processes and ideally gives place to collaboration and consensus building. Public space is the prime city space and it is the result of the different processes described. It is in public spaces where the socio-spatial-symbolic natures collide, collude and accommodate each other to give place to its physical, social, political, democratic, participatory, and meaningful roles and dimensions. The question now is how all these processes, dimensions and characteristics take place in the popular habitat of the Mexican *colonias* in relation to public space transformation, and how the social, spatial, cultural and political characteristics described about the development of the

popular habitat shape the processes of public space transformation, its roles and dimensions. Drawing on the framework proposed, the study attempts to plot such relationships and interlinkages in the context of colonias populares of Xalapa through the examination of the production and consumption of public space. That is to say through the processes of development, management, use, appropriation and meanings that are created and recreated in the public space of the colonias. Let us move to the methodological chapter to describe how this will be achieved.

Chapter Three



Methodology

Research Methodology

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3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to explain the methodology used to carry out the investigation about the dynamics of public space transformation -production and consumption- in the popular habitat. Firstly, it describes the methodological approach of the research which is based on a qualitative methodology with an ethnographical dimension through which the data collection is carried out by the use of a variety of methods. Secondly, the chapter explains why Xalapa was chosen for the study. It also explains why and how the case studies were selected in order to produce a robust and compelling research and it then discusses the different data sources available within these cases to answer the main questions of the research. The chapter then describes in detail the different research tools utilised for the development of the investigation and how these tools proved to be useful in collecting the data. Furthermore, this section also gives detail about the sort of evidence obtained from the sources of information. In addition, the chapter describes the different periods of fieldwork carried out during the investigation. Finally, it also explains how the data was analysed and interpreted and provides a brief evaluation of the methodological approach.

3.2 Methodological Approach

3.2.1 Qualitative Methodology

The investigation about the dynamics of transformation of public spaces is mainly focused on “how” questions, rather than “how many or how much” questions. It is concerned with processes, the form of these processes, the resulting environment and the feelings for those involved. The questions are: i) how is public space produced? ii) what is the nature of the processes of production? iii) what is the nature of the resulting forms? And iv) how are these physical forms consumed? Moreover the research has as a main focus the actions, perceptions and strategies towards public space of the inhabitants of colonias populares. It is believed that such exploration can only be achieved through a qualitative methodological approach. The different nature of the questions demands a multi-perspective and a combination of a variety of research tools. A qualitative approach is the most appropriate to deal with the sort of questions this research is trying to answer. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) define qualitative research as multi-method in focus, involving an **interpretative**, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their **natural settings**, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to

them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a **variety of empirical materials** (Denzin and Lincoln 2003:3). By natural settings is meant that the objects of inquiry are not removed from the venues that surround them in everyday life (Groat and Wang 2002:176). A qualitative approach endeavours to study phenomena in their complexity and entirety in their **everyday context** and objects are not reduced to single variables. It is basically about **people, with ideas, and meanings** about real life, about the participant's knowledge and practices (Flick 1998, 2002). From an architectural point of view Groat and Wang (2002) argue that qualitative methodology seeks to describe or explain **socio/physical phenomena** with complex context in a holistic manner. Therefore since we aim to explain public space socially and physically this is the most suitable methodology.

Our research on public space is naturalistic because it takes place mostly in public spaces, in close interaction with the setting and with those involved in the transformation processes of these settings. It takes place in natural settings such as parks, playgrounds, and streets, where those involved in the processes are interviewed without removing them from the public settings. Certainly people and places are investigated through their everyday context and life. On the contrary, when an interview started in a private space such as the interviewee's house, eventually the move from the private to the public space in discussion took place, in this way the research was developed in the natural setting of enquiry. Through qualitative methods, the researcher plays a very important role in interpreting and making sense of the data and the phenomena through a focus of interpretation and elicitation of meanings during data collection. Especially at the first stages, the researcher is able to reflect on the first data collected to continue, and guide further steps in the data collection process. For example, in parallel to the interviews and observations and interaction with the settings and people, interpretation of the different information takes place. In this sense, the researcher is able to reshape questions, eliminate or add new ones, explore new settings (in our case new public spaces), that may have not been within the initial research agenda. In addition, other individuals can also be interviewed and other different sorts of data can be explored.

Through a qualitative approach the researcher aims to present a holistic portrayal of the setting or phenomenon under study as the respondents themselves understand it (Groat and Wang 2002:177). This characteristic of qualitative research helps our research on public spaces, in the way that it seeks to elucidate how public space and its processes are understood by colonias' residents, what it means to them, how they make sense of it, and how they

interpret the existence and nature of public spaces in their neighbourhood environment. In few words, the research examines their perceptions, their visions, and their aspirations about it. Through eliciting these aspects, a holistic portrayal of the dynamics of public space production and consumption in colonias populares is tackled.

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) tell us that qualitative research is a multi-method in focus. Similarly, Groat and Wang (2002) describe it as the research which involves the use of multiple tactics like a bricolage. This means the use of different strategies to investigate the phenomena, these different strategies may not be totally qualitative in nature; however they are framed within a qualitative framework of analysis. In our research, this approach is essential since we are exploring public space dynamics in an integrated form which, if using a single method would, be difficult to achieve. The nature of the research questions of how space is transformed socially, spatially and symbolically demands a combination of different methods, not only interviews and observations but also in combination with personal documents, newspaper articles, photographs, sketches, and drawings, all related to public space dynamics.

In addition to the naturalistic, interpretative, and multi-method character of qualitative research, Groat and Wang (2002) introduce other characteristics which are: holistic and prolonged contact, open ended, researcher as a measurement device, analysis through words, and personal writing stance. As already explained the research on public spaces in the popular habitat aims to gain a holistic and integrated insights of the urban dynamics of public space is produced, consumed and configured through the social relations, through the spatial and physical practices and through the meaningful interpretations of those involved in these processes. In this study prolonged contact with the field took place and is a key characteristic of this research. The data would have been very difficult to obtain, without long periods of close interaction with the field. In this way, the fieldwork took place at different periods of the four years of the PhD programme, which together make a total of seven and a half months. Through this long fieldwork different aspect, occasions, and situations of the life of public spaces in the colonias were recorded. The long interaction with the setting and its people contributes to the holistic nature of the investigation as well. The open-endedness nature is another characteristic identified in qualitative research, which is characterised by the flexibility in the theoretical conceptions and research design (Groat and Wang 2002). In our research both the research design, the theory and the fieldwork interacted with and affected

each other. The research design and the data collection were influenced by the theory. And at the same time the fieldwork also influenced the research design and the theoretical underpinnings initially adopted. The different activities and practices about public spaces taking place in the colonias, significantly defined the approach and the agenda of the research. In this way, the open-ended nature of the study allowed the research to take different directions. In qualitative methodology, the researcher also plays the role of a measurement device, when taking decisions about when sufficient evidence has been gathered. In this study, different public spaces were investigated, different settings explored, and data gathered from a significant number of sources, and this came to an end when the information became over repetitive. Analysis of the words recorded by the several interviews and written documents took place. Further this was also combined with the analysis of images and visual data about public space dynamics. The data analysis is explained later in this chapter. Finally, another characteristic of qualitative methodology is about the writing style, which is characterized by a “personal informal writing stance”, in this case the writing includes little of the researcher’s personal accounts, however the voices of those involved in public space processes, are included and this also gives to our writing an ethnographic nuance. This will be described in the following section.

3.2.2 An ethnographic approach

The main objective of using ethnographic tools is that this approach offers a way to acquire an understanding of social meaning and activities of people in a given field or setting, and involves the researcher by participating directly in the activities and in close association with those under study (Brewer 2000). In ethnography, the researcher’s aim is not to create an explanatory theory that can be applied to many settings, rather ethnographic research culminates in a rich and full delineation of a particular setting that persuades a wide audience of its human validity (Groat and Wang 2002:182). In this way, this investigation seeks to validate peoples practices through a small number of cases located in one city. Our research draws on the data collected in different neighbourhoods and different public spaces, finding similarities, and particular differences in each case. What happens in one street differs from what happens in another; what happens in one neighbourhood park differs from another. The research takes into account that in some other colonias, and especially in other cities, different practices or agents may be found which may have not been covered in this thesis. Common characteristics however were found, both the differences and similarities are stressed in the thesis. The main purpose of the study is to present, through a combination of a small number

of cases a holistic approach towards the dynamics of public space in the colonias of Xalapa with the 'depth', 'intensity' and 'richness' which characterise ethnographic qualitative approaches.

In the use of qualitative methodology with an ethnographic nature, it is relevant to mention the work of Amos Rapoport (1976) who acknowledged the validity of ethnographical approaches in the study of the built environment in which cultural and social standpoints play an important role within processes of built environment production. Rapoport established an ethnographical conceptual framework of analysis stressing the strength of anthropology in the study of man-environment relations. This approach has been employed in different contexts and approximations to study processes and dynamics of built environment production and consumption (e.g. Kellett 1995; Low 2000; Elsheshtawy 2000). The validity and reliability of this methodological approach is achieved by the multiple qualitative techniques employed which together confirm the veracity of the facts. Participant observation can confirm what is said in an interview, found in a document or photograph and vice versa. By comparing and analysing these different sources of information triangulation is achieved. Participant observation can take place with different variations (insider, outsider, observer, participant, uncovered, or discovered). Qualitative ethnographic research also relies on unstructured interviews and informal conversations with the people related to the different process under study. This is the main strategy through which interviewees were approached in the study. Photographs were also employed during the interview process. Furthermore personal documents and newspaper articles also played a significant role in the story-telling about public space transformation. They also provided useful information about colonias residents' needs and actions, and even information about the conflicts between the actors involved in the different processes. Through this approach, the meanings and symbolisms people construct from their experiences in public space production and consumption were elucidated. Public space in colonias populares of Xalapa is explored through four periods of fieldwork within a period of four years, from 2001 to 2004. The first, during January 2002 began with a pilot study; the second, and the longest, focused in depth on a small number of cases studies; this took place from August to December 2002; the third took place within a period of three weeks in June 2003 and the final period lasted for two weeks in January 2004.

3.2.3 The selection of the research setting

Xalapa was chosen as a research setting for a number of reasons; i) the researcher already had knowledge of the city and its popular habitat. The researcher had conducted research¹ at the undergraduate level in the colonias populares of the city. Since the researcher studied his bachelor of architecture at the University of Veracruz in Xalapa, he had good contacts with academics that were significantly helpful in finding relevant information about in the colonias of the city, and more importantly about relevant case studies to be explored. ii) Another reason for choosing Xalapa for the development of this thesis is that the city, as many other capital cities, has followed the same patterns of growth of most Latin American cities. This growth certainly at a much slower speed and dimensions than the biggest urban centres of the country (Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey); however it does share the same characteristics as these mega cities². iii) In the colonias populares created in the 60's and 70's, high levels of consolidation are also observed. They have been already integrated to the formal urban fabric and are now surrounded by the urban growth and new low-income peripheral settlements. Thus, the city and its colonias represent an appropriate setting for the exploration of the dynamics of public space transformation. iv) Another important reason is that most urban research in Mexico has been developed using Mexico City as research setting. The CEDDU³ (Centre of Demographic and Urban Development Studies) of the Colegio de Mexico affirms that 60% of urban research in the country is about Mexico City's urban dynamics (Garza 1999). Garza identifies the urgent need to carry out research in intermediate and provincial towns and cities. These findings made Xalapa a good candidate in which to undertake urban research. v) In addition, since economic resources with which to carry out the research were very limited, the city still offers an inexpensive (for Mexican standards) access to services and facilities, necessary for the development of the fieldwork.

3.2.4 Selection of study cases

Two different phases took place in selecting the cases to explore the questions of the investigation. Initially, it was believed that by selecting public spaces located in only one neighbourhood the research would achieve an in-depth perspective into the dynamics of public space transformation. Therefore, Colonia Revolucion located on the northern periphery

¹ Research was carried out within the urbanism course part of the bachelor of architecture at the University of Veracruz. The research consisted in the examination of different colonias populares in order to evaluate different aspects of the quality of life of popular inhabitants, issues on housing, urban facilities, and services were explored in order to propose new solutions to the problems impinging on low-income neighbourhoods.

² Similarly to Mexico city, around 60% of Xalapa's territory is formed by popular settlements.

³ CEDDU is one of the most important urban research centres in the country.

of Xalapa, presenting high rates of urban consolidation, was selected to carry out the investigation. Initially therefore the fieldwork was highly concentrated on different public spaces of this colonia. However, during the first interviews it was found that there were public spaces located outside the colonia which were also meaningful to the respondents. These other public spaces usually emerged during the conversations due to the significance of their dynamics of improvement and transformation. These spaces were relevant from the point of view of the respondents, therefore the researcher decided to explore them too. Thus, taking advantage of the flexibility offered by qualitative methodology, the research was redirected and reshaped to integrate those public spaces located in other neighbourhoods. Rather than basing the selection of cases only on the researcher's perspective according to rates of urban consolidation, the selection was based on the dynamism of transformation, production and consumption processes important to the interviewees. In this way, during the second phase the research moved from one neighbourhood to integrate spaces which were located in another four different neighbourhoods. Apart from Colonia Revolucion, these neighbourhoods are Colonia Los Pinos (located on the southern periphery), Colonia Constituyentes (located on the eastern periphery) and Colonia Ferrocarrilera (located on the north, although closer to the centre) and Colonia Tres de Mayo (located on the southwest periphery) (Figure 3.1). Extending the number of study cases to other colonias was extremely helpful to corroborate facts and attitudes towards public space in the colonias of Xalapa. Moreover, we achieved a much broader vision of public space transformation without sacrificing the in depth analysis and understanding of the dynamics.

These colonias share similarities regarding their levels of consolidation; these will be explored in the following chapter. After, having included more neighbourhoods, the research was limited and concentrated on a very small number of public spaces, mainly one per neighbourhood in order to keep the focus of the investigation, and eschew superficiality. The research also draws on some other public spaces that were also explored along the whole process of data collection, in order to reinforce the arguments contributing to create a compelling and robust analysis. The way the selection of the cases took place confirms the nature of qualitative research process in which the analysis of the interviews leads to a reformulation of the research design, and in our experience the cases to be addressed.

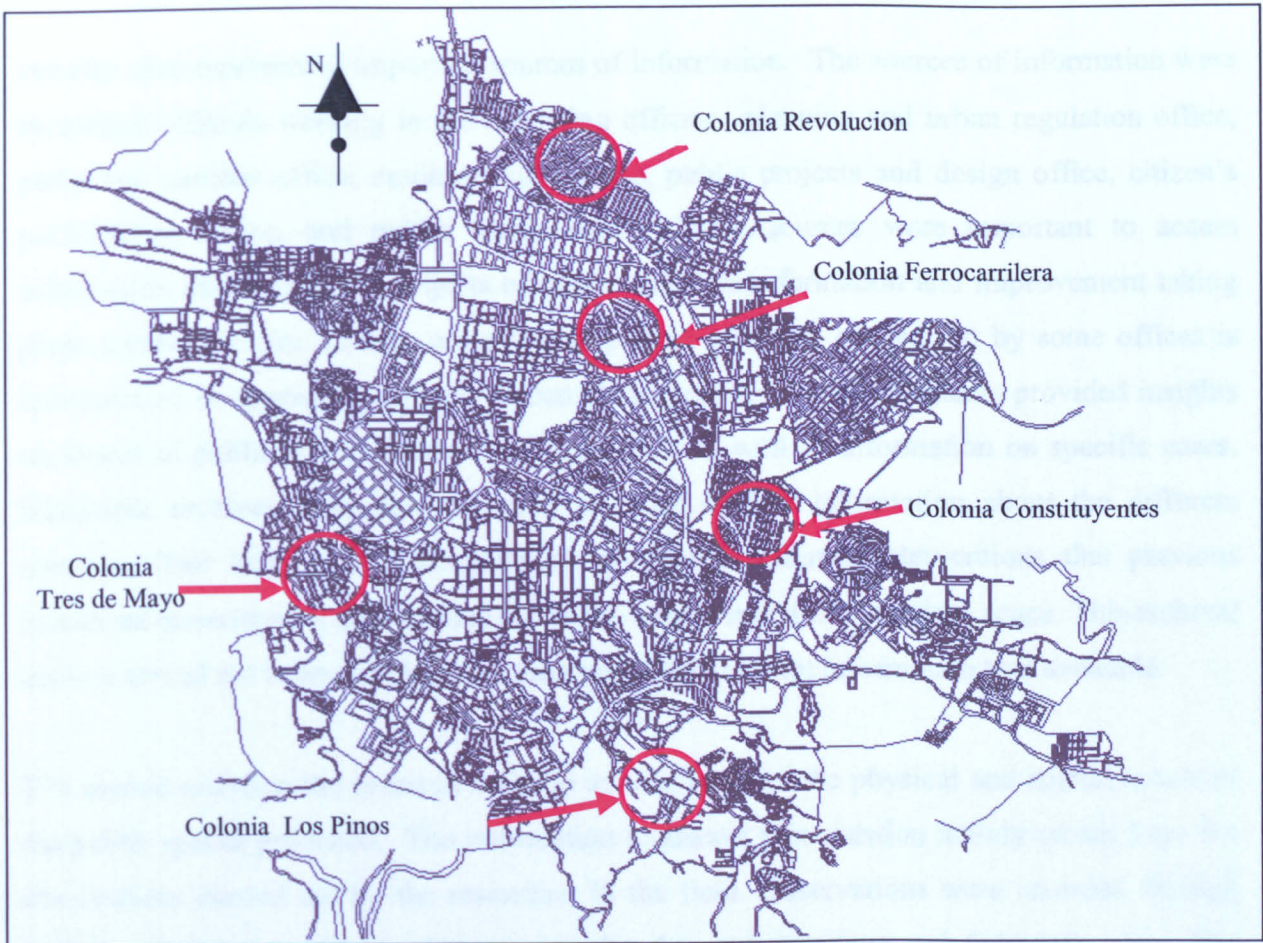


Figure 3.1 The location of colonias studied in Xalapa

3.2.5 Data sources

As mentioned earlier, qualitative approaches are characterized by relying on a variety of empirical materials which are also obtained from a variety of sources of information. The sources of information were identified according to the nature of the questions that the research sought to answer. Firstly, one of the main interests of this research is about examining the interaction taking place between the actors involved in the process of transformation, through the question of –‘Why and how the different actors involved in the urban development process shape the public space in popular neighbourhoods?’ In order to answer this question a combination of two sources of information were employed. The first source are colonias’ residents, especially those involved in the process of production of public space (creation and improvement), such as neighbourhood activists, leaders (agents of change), and community committees (Appendix 1). These informants also offered artefacts related to public space management, such as documents and photographs about the transformation and improvement of the public space and even newspaper articles in addition to the data gathered through interview techniques. As well as these key informants in the colonias populares, municipal civil servants related to the development and management of

the city, also represented important sources of information. The sources of information were municipal officials working in the following offices: planning and urban regulation office, parks and gardens office, environment's office, public projects and design office, citizen's participation office, and public works office. These sources were important to access information about different projects of public space transformation and improvement taking place around the city. In fact, a significant part of the work carried out by some offices is concentrated in upgrading colonias' urban environment. These informants provided insights on issues of public space production at city level as well as information on specific cases. Municipal archives were also explored in order to find information about the different colonias, their history, and development and about different interventions that previous municipal governments have carried out in the improvement of the public space. This archival activity turned out to be unhelpful because very little relevant information was available.

The second question the research seeks to answer is about the physical and spatial nature of the public spaces produced. The information to answer this question mainly comes from the observations carried out by the researcher in the field. Observations were recorded through different techniques such as photographs, sketches and drawings and fieldwork notes. The third question relates to the strategies of protection, maintenance and control of public spaces. To explain these strategies the researcher also relies on observation as well as on interviews with those in charge of and committed to public space maintenance and protection within the colonias. Generally, these informants were the same individuals participating in the initial production processes. Finally to answer the question about how public space is used and appropriated, the sources for information were the everyday actions of the residents using colonias' public spaces. Users of the spaces were interviewed. Every day actions were recorded in a fieldwork diary and interviews were tape recorded as well. Users provided information about their everyday experiences, and their perceptions about the physical and social qualities of the spaces. The different techniques of data collection are further explained below.

3.3 Data collection

3.3.1 Interviews and main themes

Interviews were the main method of obtaining the information about public space transformation. The decision to carry out interviews was simple, the questions the research

aims to answer are not written anywhere and very little research and documents exist about the themes of the thesis, therefore interviewing colonias' inhabitants as well as local government officials was a very important strategy to collect the data. Two types of interviews were used; unstructured and informal as well as semi-structured interviews. The type of interview format would depend on the nature and position of the interviewee. Unstructured and informal interviews were usually carried out when interviewees were colonias' residents. In the colonias two groups of interviewees were selected. The first group was formed by residents involved in the processes of production such as leaders, activists, and heads of committees of improvements. And the second group were residents involved in the consumption of public space, everyday users of the space. One interviewee could be part of both groups, however depending on the knowledge and role of the resident in the public space dynamics of the colonia, the topics of the interview were defined. In defining the direction and theme of the interview the researcher played a very important role.

Through interviews with residents involved in the processes of production the research aimed to discover:

- The problems impinging on public space life, which influenced and eventually lead to promote public space improvement and transformation. Relating this question back to our literature the aim was to find out about people's environmental perception: the knowing, the feelings and the doing something about it (Rapoport 1977).
- Roles in the management of public space. This involved finding information about peoples' position in the development processes and how they make use of resources, power and under which rules they operate to achieve public space transformation (Giddens 1984; Bentley 1999)
- The difficulties, the conflictive nature, battlefield, contestation (Bentley 1999; Low and Lawrance 2003) experienced to get improvement and transformation. This involves finding information about the competing and conflictive interests of the actors involved in processes of transformation (within and outside the community).
- In the same conceptual framework we sought to find data about the constraints (organizational, economic, and physical) affecting the development of public spaces.
- The experiences in organising the community to pursue improvement and transformation of their public spaces. It was also desired to learn about the

empowerment of the community to achieve organization, participation and collective action (Desai 1996; Choguill 1996; Healey 1997) and therefore to carry out transformation

- Direct actions in the physical improvement and transformation. This implied to examine the way people mark their territoriality, personalise and appropriate public space through their direct actions, constructing public place.
- Issues about the significance that the transformation and improvement play in peoples' everyday lives. This meant to explore the meanings and the social construction of public space (Knox and Pinch 2000; Madanipour 1999).

Through interviews focused on the consumption processes, every day users of public space and colonias' residents were randomly chosen and interviewed in order to know about the uses and appropriation of the spaces. In Crawford's (1999) words, this means to reveal the everyday public space of the colonias and reveal the social construction rather than the social production as Low (2000) argues. In this case, it was not necessary that the interviewee would have been involved in the processes of production. The main information that the researcher tried to obtain through these interviews was about:

- Main users and uses of public spaces in the colonia environment, and whether conflicts and problems exist over the usage of public spaces. Is there a battlefield and contestation for the use of public spaces?
- Perceptions and attitudes towards the use, protection and maintenance of their public spaces. This meant to ask about public space participation (Abogabir 2000) and people's responsibility (Oviedo 2000) towards their public environment.
- Perceptions about the physical qualities of public space. This raises the questions about the recognition of benefits and opportunities provided by public spaces (physically, psychologically, socially, economically, and symbolically) (Carr et al. 1992; Carmona, 2003; Woolley 2003)
- Activities taking place in the public spaces on daily basis, and memories about different events in the life of public spaces and how these aspects render significance in people's lives. In few words, the aim was to find out how public spaces are socially constructed and how these become meaningful and symbolic entities in the everyday life of the colonias.

Although this research is not focused on governments programmes and policies, semi-structured interviews with local government officials related to public space productions were necessary in order to know how they interact with colonias' residents, and how the local government supports the production of public spaces in the colonias populares. In these interviews, similar themes to those explored in the interviews with the residents involved in production and development were tackled (actors, power interplay, battlefield, negotiation, collaboration, participation) (Appendix 3). Through these interviews the researcher sought to find information about:

- The roles that the local government plays in the transformation-production (development and improvement) of public spaces in the colonias populares.
- The attitudes towards public spaces (construction, improvement, and maintenance) within the local governmental agenda.
- The nature of interaction between community and local government officials in the development and improvement of public spaces.
- Conflicts experienced within these interactions.
- Projects about public space improvement in the colonias populares, including information about design and construction.

Interviews were a major tool for collecting data; however, the other research techniques such as observation and participation were also equally important in order to corroborate the statements produced by interviewees, as well as to explore the physical processes and characteristics of public space transformation. These other methodological tools will be explained later in the chapter.

3.3.2 Conducting interviews and conversations

“Nobody ever before, had asked me what I think, how I feel about living here, about what we have gone through in the colonia...” (Señora Juana, Colonia Revolucion)

Long conversations took place in the data collection process. Listening to stories about the consolidation of public spaces coming from the voice of colonias' residents was a delightful task. Interviewing provides a way of generating empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives, learning about people's feelings, and thoughts. The

primary aim of interviews is to generate data which give an authentic insight into people's experiences (Silverman 1993). Through conversations with colonias' residents, the researcher was able to get immersed in the life of the public spaces of the colonias, and to learn about peoples experiences and feelings about these settings in relation to transformation. The type of interview employed used an unstructured-informal format which takes the form of natural or ordinary conversations. With this interview approach respondents are not only interviewees or simple informants but they also take the role of *conversational partners*, as Rubin and Rubin (1995) call them. Respondents take an active role in shaping the discussion, turning the interview process into a cooperative experience, in which both interviewer and interviewee work together to achieve the shared goal of understanding (Rubin and Rubin 1995). In this way, colonias' residents were usually approached in a very subtle and informal way, in order to gain trust, and make them confident about talking and telling stories about their experiences in the consolidation of public spaces in their colonias. No predetermined questions were set up, as the interview was adapted to the interviewees' nature and priorities. They were encouraged to talk freely. The absence of a formal structure gives a greater freedom for the respondents to answer accurately and in depth (Brewer 2000). Using this approach was helpful; however, some difficulties were faced by the researcher in keeping the focus on the topic of the conversation. People's accounts are so rich and related to many other issues which affect their lives that it is easy to deviate. Freedom to answer is important, however if too much freedom is granted the subject of interest may get lost in some other issues. In these cases the researcher had to be clever enough to redirect the conversation again to the subject of interest. In order to avoid these situations, visual methods were employed (this is explained further in this chapter). Brewer (2000) tells us about the difficulties when carrying out unstructured interviews and he argues that unstructured interviews require great interviewer skills; the interviewer needs to be able to sustain and control conversation, to know when to probe or prompt and when to listen and remain silent. It also requires the ability to read social cues from respondents and know when to stop pushing a line of questioning. Despite the difficulties that this type of interview imposes, this approach produced insights into more personal experiences, feelings and perceptions about the public spaces under study. Further, this approach was adopted to build up confidence, trust and eventually friendship with those involved in the processes, which was crucial for the development of further fieldwork stages. This was achieved within the ethical research obligations of honesty, openness and directness. At the beginning of the interview process,

the researcher always explained the purposes of the interview and asked permission to tape record the conversation.

In the light of the ethnographic approach, these conversations represent a very important source for presenting the information in the empirical chapters of the thesis. Our writing draws on the voices of the interviewees in order to immerse the reader into the experiences of those involved in public space processes. The value of this approach has been recognised in built-environment research (Kellett 2000). Kellett uses oral testimonies in his study about housing consolidation in popular settlements in Colombia. Oral testimonies are based on dialogue and the construction of a relationship between the researcher and the respondents, and a sharing of knowledge and experience through which the dynamics of the built-environment, processes, values, meanings, are clearly elucidated. Furthermore, Kellett (2000) argues that the use of these methodological approaches represents a way of empowering people, through their interpretations and understandings which can lead to a clearer articulation of needs and priorities and to the creation of more sustainable upgrading and improvement strategies.

In addition, listening to stories about public spaces, in public spaces, taking advantage of the quality of publicness was an interesting experience. Usually one can easily approach and interact with almost anyone in public spaces and can talk about the space, about the physical qualities, character, and experiences. This allowed the researcher, firstly to gain insights about the users of the space individually or in groups, and to learn about the social life taking place there. In addition, these conversations also led to identify key informants involved in the development process of the space.

As mentioned earlier, interviews with municipal officials took place. The strategy of carrying out these interviews differed from the informal and unstructured conversations that usually took place in the colonias' public space. Addressing municipal officials is not as easy as addressing a colonia's dweller. Interviewing a municipal director or head of office, requires more preparation and planning. Firstly, this sort of informant cannot be approached spontaneously, it is necessary to set up appointments through phone calls or/and even regular visits to their offices in order to get the appointment. In some occasions, the appointment was not kept by the official on the day of the meeting. This could be explained due to the fact that some municipal servants show attitudes of resistance and suspicion when researchers and

students try to investigate issues about the functioning of the municipal institution and their activities in the management of the city. Eventually, these key informants were interviewed using a semi-structure format (Appendix 3). The topics of these interviews were defined according to the nature of the office and its activities in relation to public spaces in the city.

3.3.3 Visual Methods: I have photographs!

“A photograph may become a reference point through which and informant can represent aspects of his or her reality” (Pink 200:64).

Photographs were employed within the interview process, especially in those unstructured conversations held with the residents of the colonias. This technique comes from anthropology and sociology and is known as ‘photo-elicitation’ (Caldarola 1985). It is a straightforward method to understand and utilize. It involves using photographs to invoke comments, memory and discussion in the course of an interview. Specific examples of social relations or cultural form depicted in the photographs can become the basis for a discussion of broader abstractions and generalities; conversely vague memories can be given sharpness and focus, unleashing a flood of detail (Banks 2001). Initially, photographs of the public spaces under study were taken by the researcher, in order to use them in the interviews. Photographs were used to evoke experiences and memories, perceptions about the public space, and processes of transformation and improvements. The photographs also played the role of redirecting the interview in case of deviation. They were used as a tool to bring the conversation back to the themes of interest, and as tool for the researcher to emphasise on comments, and relevant issues mentioned by the respondent which revealed important information and required further discussion.

On the other hand, in some cases the photographs taken by the researcher turned out to be less important because residents had their own photographs depicting different events and facts about the social and physical development of public spaces. During the interviews, when residents were shown some photographs of the spaces, they immediately said ‘I also have photographs of the park (or street)!’ The researcher encouraged respondents to search for the photographs in their boxes and drawers. Residents’ photographs were of the transformation of the colonia, the activities carried out in public spaces, the activities related to improvement, or the social activities, such as a party, and some other important events that took place in the public space under discussion. This was a fortunate development, because the photographs demonstrated to be very valuable source of information about public space dynamics through

which the researcher could also corroborate the veracity of facts. Moreover, information about the physical aspects of the settings and their people, uses, and activities that occurred in the past was also available in these photographs. In this way both the oral testimonies and the photos complemented each other to create very valuable data. And more importantly, the examination of the dynamics of public space transformation could be scrutinised not only through the researcher's eyes but also through the eyes of the residents, through the eyes of those carrying out transformation, improvement, construction, use and appropriation. Their photographs depicted events meaningful to the residents' everyday life. Photographs showed what was important and meaningful for people in the life of the public spaces of their colonias.

I tried to get as many photographs taken by the residents as possible. The strategy was to use the photographs taken by the researcher, at the beginning of the interview, in doing so the interviewee would be encouraged to look for their photographs. Eventually this implied two or even three in depth interviews with the same person, because in some cases photographs were not at hand, or the respondent did not remember, or know where these old photographs were stored. The photographs were digitalized by the researcher which also necessitated that they be borrowed from their owners for a couple of days, and then returned to them. This was another achievement in the building up of trust and confidence from the beginning of the interview process as residents would not give their photographs to some one who does not seem reliable. Photographs are regarded by their owners as something very valuable; a valuable object where part of their life is recorded, thus most owners were very cautious. They wanted to make sure that photographs would be returned. (Figure 3.2)



Figure 3.2 Interviewing with photographs. In the first picture, the researcher is interviewing a resident of colonia Revolucion using the researcher's photos. In the second picture, a resident is talking about public space transformation using his own photographs. It is interesting to see the way these photos have been set up on a board. This informs us about the significance of the photos and more importantly the significance that represents public space improvement for these people.

Photographs were helpful in awakening an interest, encouraging people to talk and to give an opinion about the public space in discussion. For example while interviewing people in a neighbourhood parks or streets, some other individuals usually joined the conversation. This was because while showing the photographs to the interviewee some other users around in the space were interested by the photographs, and wanted to know what was going on, and what we were talking about. This was a very rich experience because it demonstrated that people were interested in talking about the settings they were using, about their qualities, and physical conditions. Without the use of photographs people would not have got close enough to give an opinion. In this way, in some cases, a conversation that started with one person ended up in group of up to four people talking about the public space. In these situations, I kept asking questions and tape-recorded peoples' comments and answers.

3.3.4 Personal documents

Personal artefacts represented another important source of evidence provided by the colonias' residents involved in the processes of public space development and transformation. They also played an important role during the interview and conversation process. These artefacts are in the form of documents which have been compiled during the urban consolidation process. The documents are mainly in the form of letters addressed to different municipal agencies and individuals whom residents believed they could get help from. These letters are addressed to politicians, planning officials, local government officials such as the Public Works Office, Citizen Participation Office, Parks and Gardens Office, and some others depending on the service required (e.g. and Water and Sanitation Direction). In these written statements the colonias' residents take the role of petitioners expressing their problems and needs, and some times, possible solutions. These letters inform us about the different needs and problems experienced by residents in their public space. Furthermore, they inform us about the residents' agenda of building and transforming their urban environment, and even the ways that they try to solve problems and needs. They also give evidence about when and how residents try to carry out improvement and transformation in their public space. If these requests were answered positively changes occurred, on the other hand, many other letters were never answered. This required the colonias' residents to seek different ways to find solutions. In addition, some residents also kept newspaper articles in addition to these letters. These are articles about special and relevant events and facts related to public space transformation. Furthermore, newspaper articles were externally collected to complement the

information. This data represents an important source of information about the dynamics of transformation.

3.3.5 Observing and participating

Research in most disciplines employs observation as a research tool. The researcher is always observing what is happening around in the field. Observation in social sciences is about observing people doing things and how they do them. Direct observation in the field permits one to approach the study with naturalistic dimension which is too rare with other techniques. Observation implies experiencing and observing at first hand a range of dimensions such as social actions, behaviour, interactions, relationships, and events, as well as spatial, locational and temporal dimensions (Mason 2002:84). Different observational approaches were carried out in the study of the public space. In some situations, I was simply an observer of a social interaction or a physical setting and in some other occasions I also participated in the social actions taking place in the setting under investigation. These different approaches will be described in the following paragraphs.

a) The pure observer

The 'participant as observer' role took place in those situations where I was only observing the facts but did not participate in the real social interaction. This role was played on different occasions during the fieldwork. It was used to explore social interactions in which the different actors were participating in making decisions, and discussing about the transformation and improvement of their public spaces. I was present only to observe without interacting with the actors involved in the production process. This role was used when observing the meetings held in the colonias where municipal officials (such as civil servants from the citizen's participation office or public work's office) and the residents of the colonias met. In these meetings, the negotiations taking place were about what to build, how to build, and when to build. I mainly took notes about these interactions and also tape recorded the entire discussions. In these meetings some people knew that I was a researcher trying to learn about these meetings such as the municipal officials or residents who I contacted in the first place. However for the majority, I was an observer playing the role of an accompanying person of either a resident or a municipal official. In this way, I tried to avoid the '*Hawthorne effect*' (Zeisel 1984). Zeisel describes this effect as the effect on the actions and behaviours of the participants because they know they are observed as part of an investigation.

Observations, without interacting with those performing actions were carried out when observing the activities and daily life taking place in the public space. This was carried out in order to learn how public spaces are used and appropriated. This involved having an observational agenda in which spaces were visited at different times. Three periods of observation took place in selected settings, one in the morning, the second in the afternoon, and the last in the evening, in order to record the daily life of these spaces. The different activities taking place in public spaces were recorded through fieldwork notes, photographs, and annotated plans and drawings. Ordinary daily use was observed, but also sporadic events such as parties and celebrations took place. In this research activity I took the role of a pure observer of the environment. This role was that of a stranger in the public spaces, who not only observed activities but also observed the form of the urban space. Another situation where I also played the role of pure observer was while looking at actions of physical improvement and transformation of public spaces. Unfortunately this observation did not take place in all the sites. In the sites where actions of transformation had already been carried out different research tools were employed to elicit the information (e.g. interviews and residents' photographs). In this observational strategy I played the role of a 'secret observer' (Zeisel, 1981). This tool presents some disadvantages because secret observers are by definition distant and removed from the action; therefore I combined this type of observation with participation, and became part of the action. This is described in the following paragraph.

b) Participating and observing

Participant observation takes place when the researcher observes phenomena while participating in the activities within a group becoming to some extent a member of it (Robson 2002). It involves gathering data by means of participation in the daily life of the informants in their natural setting: watching, observing and talking to them in order to discover their interpretations, social meanings and activities (Brewer 2000). Participant observation was employed in certain events and activities within the processes of learning about production and consumption. For example, I was immersed in moments where residents of the colonias were the main performers of the transformation of their public space, such as doing clearing activities. At these times I even helped residents to clean their public space. This was a great opportunity to learn about the strategies and actions of transformation and improvement. I also took the role of observer and participant in the public life while interacting with the people using the public space and performing the public life of the colonias. By this time I

was viewed as another member of the community because people had got used to seeing me in the neighbourhoods walking around, and talking to people on a daily basis. I was even invited to different kinds of celebrations such as parties and even religious events, in which I became another member of the group celebrating and partying. I became another performer of public life in the neighbourhood environment. These activities allowed me to get involved with the customs, traditions and meaningful events in the public life of the colonias. These experiences were very significant in learning how public space is used.

c) Observing the urban environment

So far, we have addressed observation as a tool in the social sciences essentially observing people and social action, however, the research also includes and examination of the environment produced by these social processes. Observation is a primary tool in the study of the built environment. As seen in Lynch's (1960) *Image of the city*, where he approaches the city through the visual perception, reading the urban environment with a process in which the observer builds images of the urban environment through their experience in the urban space. These images are elements of the physical form⁴ of the city, which are elucidated by an interactive process of observation within a relationship between the object observed⁵ and the observer⁶. Another important strategy for observing the urban environment is proposed by Cullen in *Townscape* (Cullen 1961). Cullen looks at the urban environment in which streets, buildings and spaces are explored through the faculty of sight, through which one apprehends the urban environment, experiencing it through the serial vision, caused by the body's movement being here or there, feeling this or that through visual experience and capturing the content of the urban space. Similarly Jane Jacobs (1961) studies the American city, through observation and apprehends the uses of sidewalks, parks, and neighbourhoods in the traditional urban fabric. Another observer is William Whyte (1980) who looks at city spaces, streets, parks and playgrounds, observing the urban life, uses, and activities. He looks at the space as a setting of social life and evaluates the responsiveness to its form and design for the development of public life. We also draw on all the physical clues that the built environment offers to give information about. In the words of Zeisel (1984), the researcher looks for the physical traces that reveal public space transformation. Further, Allan Jacobs (1985) who studied cities through observation as a sensual experience with no barriers, looks at all those elements available in the urban environment while walking. The researcher

⁴ Lynch identifies 'paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks' as elements of the city form.

⁵ For Lynch, the object observed provides clues for an understanding, therefore provoking symbolism and meaning in the observer.

⁶ The observer is able to evoke meaning, identity and symbolism from the clues offered by the form of the city.

acquires strong evidence about the history and present dynamics of an area: when and for whom it was built; what physical and social, and economic changes have taken place; who lives there now; what major issues and problems exist? Jacobs stressed how the urban environment can be explored through clues offered by the wide variety of physical elements that make up the city environment, clues in buildings (styles, size, materials, workmanship, and maintenance), clues on the uses of buildings and land, on the landscape, artefacts, people, public spaces, commercial areas, and urban fabric. In this way observation is a tool by which to gain understanding, making ourselves intimate with the built environment under study. There are several examples in the study of city form, public spaces, activities and urban life based purely on observation. The way observation has been used by these urban researchers offers insights in the way the physical transformation of public spaces can be observed. Observing the physical transformation of public spaces involved visiting the study cases several times during the different fieldwork periods in order to record the physical characteristics and mainly the changes that may have occurred during the time I was away from the field. These observations were mainly recorded through photographs, fieldwork notes, and drawings. I also tape-recorded my own comments describing the physical characteristics of the spaces and the changes occurred.

3.3.6 Fieldwork strategy

As mentioned earlier, the data was collected during four fieldwork periods. In these periods, different research activities took place and different research strategies were employed. Each period shares similarities and differences in focus. The main reason to carry out four periods was to record the production and consumption processes during the time available for doing the PhD program (4 years). In this way public spaces could be studied at different seasons, and also at different improvement and transformation stages. Moreover, since the research covers various themes, each period help to gather the data available to answer the different questions. For example, in one period, the researcher was not able to interview a key actor in the development process, so later on in a period this was achieved. In one period some events and facts of public space life were not recorded, and then later these were recorded during a further stage. And most importantly these different periods allowed me to follow a modest longitudinal approach. This involved having the opportunity to record events, actions and changes within a period of four years. In the following paragraphs, these fieldwork periods are described more in detail.

a) First stage: Pilot study

The first fieldwork stage took place in January 2002. This stage consisted in a pilot study, with an exploratory approach of the public space in the popular settlements of Xalapa, having as the main objectives to clarify and refine the framework of analysis, to refine and redefine the main research questions, to test the potential of the chosen setting to explore these questions, and finally to test the suitability of the qualitative methodological approach to carry out the research.

During this first fieldwork period, the importance of carrying out an exploratory study of a specific built environment was acknowledged. A first explorative approach involved the researcher deliberately entering the different colonias populares of the city of Xalapa during one month in order to immerse the researcher into the urban popular environment of the city. The researcher knew little about the dynamics of public space transformation taking place in the colonias of Xalapa and the exploratory study was necessary to confirm the potential of the research. In this respect Stebbins (2001:51) argues *'researchers explore when they have little or no scientific knowledge about the group, process, activity, situation they want to examine but nevertheless have reason to believe it contains element worth discovering'*. The pilot study was extremely useful, as it would have been very difficult to define the research direction without carrying out a first exploratory study. This consisted in walks, observations, and short conversations which covered a significant number of peripheral colonias of the city. Through this, I was able to discover and rediscover the built environment, the life and the people inhabiting colonias populares and more specifically look at their public spaces. After carrying out this first approximation of the public space in the popular settlements of Xalapa, the main frameworks of analysis, as well as the sub themes, were clearly elucidated. Therefore, the exploratory study⁷ helped to clarify the concepts and questions to be examined extensively in the future in a second and main fieldwork period. With regard to this, Stebbins argues: *'The myriad research possibilities that become evident on completion of the first exploration, when considered together, add up to strong temptation to push ahead with another project that will further expand and elaborate the nascent grounded theory'* (Stebbins 2001:56).

⁷ The findings of this first stage of fieldwork are published in a research paper (Hernandez 2002).

In this first fieldwork period, twenty one colonias were visited: (Figure 3.3)

- In the northern part of the city: Colonia Revolucion, Colonia Lagunilla, Colonia 21 de Marzo, Colonia Sostenes Blanco, Colonia México, Colonia Rafael Lucio, and Colonia Ferrocarrilera. (in yellow)
- In the northeast area of the city: Colonia Casa Blanca, and Colonia Constituyentes.
- In the northwest: Colonia Veracruz, Colonia Lomas del Seminario, Colonia Lomas de San Roque, Colonia Luz del barrio, Colonia Mártires 28 de Agosto, Colonia Rafael Hernandez.
- In the southwest: Colonia Tres de Mayo, Colonia Benito Juárez, Colonia Libertad.
- In the south: Colonia Mártires de Chicago and Colonia Los Pinos.

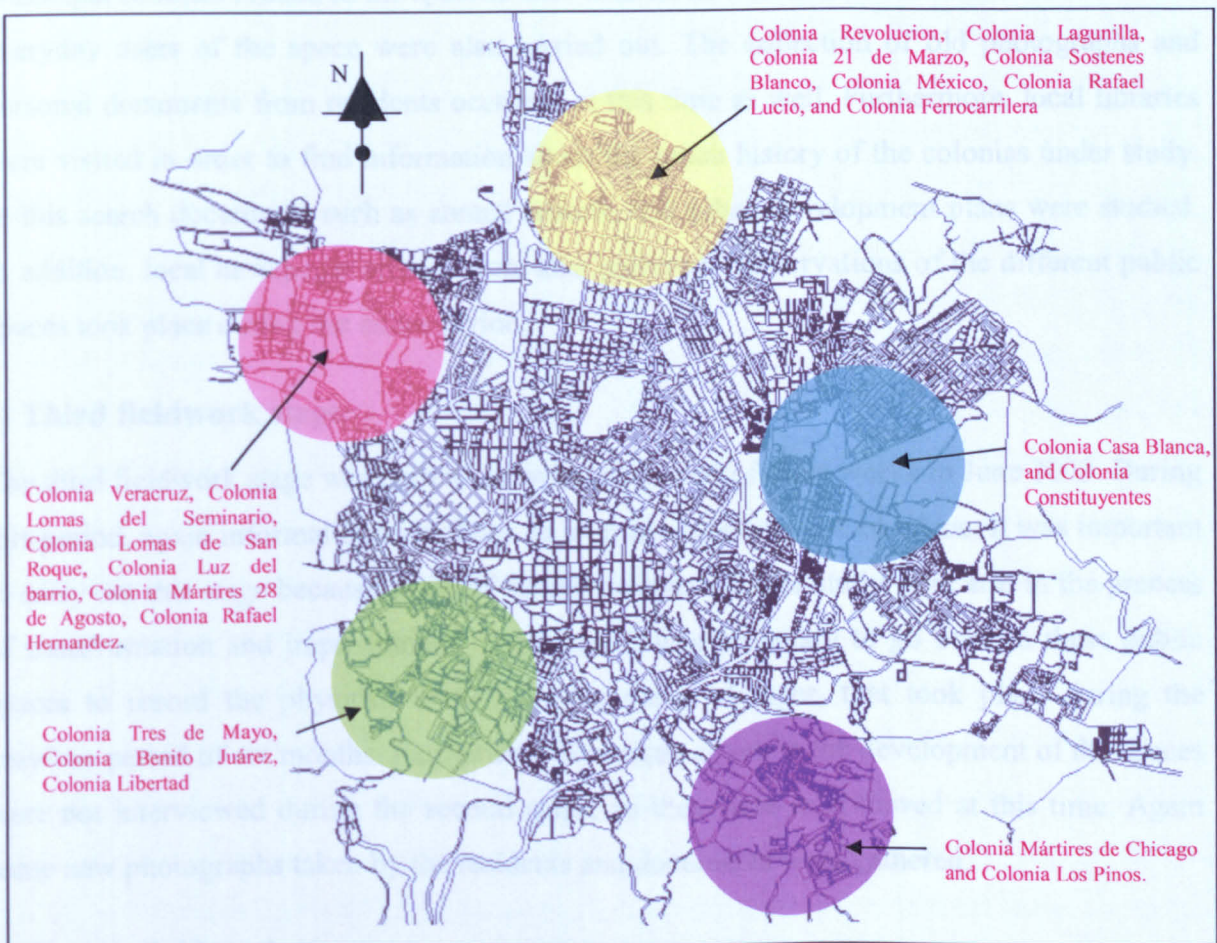


Figure 3.3 Colonias of Xalapa visited during the first fieldwork stage.

b) Second fieldwork stage:

The second stage of fieldwork took place from August to December 2002. During this second stage the scope of the investigation was narrowed down to specific case studies. At this stage the decision to investigate a small number of public spaces located in different colonias was

taken. Thus, at this stage, public spaces located in Colonia Revolucion, Colonia Ferrocarrilera, Colonia Constituyentes, Colonia Los Pinos and Colonia 3 de Mayo were chosen. The research focuses on specific streets and neighbourhood parks located in these colonias where processes of transformation were occurring. Therefore they provided substantial evidence to answer the different questions of the research.

This second fieldwork stage lasted for five months covering part of the summer, the autumn and part of the winter. During this time, interviews with key actors in the different processes of production and consumption of streets and neighbourhood parks were carried out. Interviews with improvement committees in the colonias (formed by residents), with municipal officials related to the specific case studies, as well as interviews with residents and everyday users of the space were also carried out. The collection of old photographs and personal documents from residents occurred at this time as well. Furthermore, local libraries were visited in order to find information about the urban history of the colonias under study. In this search documents such as annual reports, and urban development plans were studied. In addition, local newspaper articles were also gathered. Observations of the different public spaces took place during the entire period.

c) Third fieldwork stage

The third fieldwork stage was carried out within a period of three weeks in June 2003. During this period, again informal conversations as well as observations took place. It was important to carry out this stage because some of the public spaces under study were still in the process of transformation and improvement. Therefore, it was necessary to go back to these public spaces to record the physical, as well as the social changes, that took place during the previous period of six months. Furthermore some key actors in the development of the spaces were not interviewed during the second stage, so they were interviewed at this time. Again some new photographs taken by the residents and documents were gathered.

d) Fourth fieldwork stage

The fourth and final stage was carried out in January 2004. This final visit to the field was in order to gather secondary information, such as the colonia's history and plans. This had not been available earlier. Some of the public spaces being studied were visited and changes were recorded again. At this point the researcher had not intended to gather more data about the physical and social transformation of the public spaces; however the built environment is

always changing and therefore is the public space. Different and new interventions were discovered, as well as new social events took place and had to be recorded.

3.4 Analysis and interpretation

For analysing the data an inductive approach was used. The analysis of the in-depth interviews, as well as the photographs and other sources of evidence, required a long, interactive process of identifying key themes, developing and defining a coding scheme, and eventually synthesizing the results into the textual narrative. The data was constantly questioned about key events, facts and turning points. Patterns, themes and regularities were searched for as well as for contrasts, paradoxes and irregularities in order to be able to make concluding arguments and theories. The interpretational process of the research took place from the first stage of fieldwork when the researcher, through his analysis and interpretation, redefined the scope and the research questions. There was also an analytical process taking place while interviewing, and observing in the field. Back in the studio in Newcastle, the transcription of all the interviews took place. I was advised to be selective and transcribe key parts; however I decided that all the interviews should be transcribed because they all provided information related to the different processes. Some interviews were important for their information on production of the spaces and some others on use or for both, and full contextual information was important for a full understanding. After transcribing all the interviews, a coding scheme was developed in order to categorize and classify the data into different themes that could answer the research questions. In this way, three major categories were created; one covering themes about the social production of public space, in which actors, relationships and interactions were identified (sub-categories such as roles, action, conflicts, negotiations and interests); another major category covered themes about the physical transformation and materialization of public space, in which physical aspects of design and the construction of public space were identified (sub-categories such as design visions, solutions and construction processes); and the third category covered issues about the consumption (social construction) of public spaces in which functional, social and symbolic aspects are grouped (sub-categories such as uses, patterns of use, control, conflicts over use and meanings). From these three major categories the analysis of the data unfolded and it was possible to explore its full analytical potential identifying dimensions, consequences and relationships in order to cover all the crucial issues of the scope of the research. Photographs, documents and newspaper articles were also ordered and classified according to the coding

framework in order to describe and use them as evidence in the arguments developed in further stages of the research.

The analysis of the interviews was carried out in the original language (Spanish) of the interviewees. Translation of some extracts was carried out in order to include people's voices as a source of evidence to support the arguments in discussion. Translation is a difficult task due to the dangers of losing meanings, particular expressions and ways of talking. Careful translation work had to be done in order to be as accurate as possible. Literal translations of the interviewees' expressions were kept as much as possible so as to retain the originality of their statements. The risk of conveying a different meaning from the reality expressed by the interviewee had to be avoided. In this way we followed what Newmark (1991) proposed in his translation theory which is based on the semantic and communicative concepts. Semantic means literal translation concerned with the author, and communicative means effectiveness, concerned with the reader. A combination of both keeping meanings but at the same time conveying messages accurately was the main objective of the researcher during the translation process.

3.5 Assessment of the methodology

As already mentioned, the pilot study had tested the potential of a qualitative methodology, and had demonstrated the suitability of this approach. The nature of the research is an explorative one, seeking to investigate processes and meanings in a specific context, examining the how of public space dynamics, which validates the use of a qualitative approach over another (e.g. quantitative). Although, the use of quantitative approaches for studying public spaces is not dismissed, for example if the aim is to examine users perceptions in a wider context and involves a greater number of individuals, this can be achieved through the use of questionnaires and surveys. However that was not the purpose of this research. In our case, a combined methodology was not necessary. Moreover, the limitations and the lack of economic and human resources (e.g. lack of research assistance to carry out data collection) also influenced decisions about how to pursue the collection of data to investigate public space dynamics in the popular habitat.

The use of a qualitative approach proved to be suitable during the fieldwork, when the researcher was able to elucidate the right evidence for answering the research questions.

However, the use of unstructured interviews was very demanding work and was time consuming. On the one hand, the researcher wanted to establish a friendly and relaxed relationship and atmosphere of trust with the respondent in order to get truthful answers. However, the informality in some interviews, turned to be a bit difficult to manage. For example some respondents were continuously distracted by other matters and people, which made it difficult for the researcher to keep the continuity of an interview, a question or a thought. We have to admit that this is one of the pitfalls of interviewing people in their everyday settings and life. On the other hand, the use of unstructured interviews and observations generally allowed the apprehension of some attitudes and perceptions that were important for the researcher, especially when these situations took place in public spaces, which may not have been possible to elicit through another type of methodology.

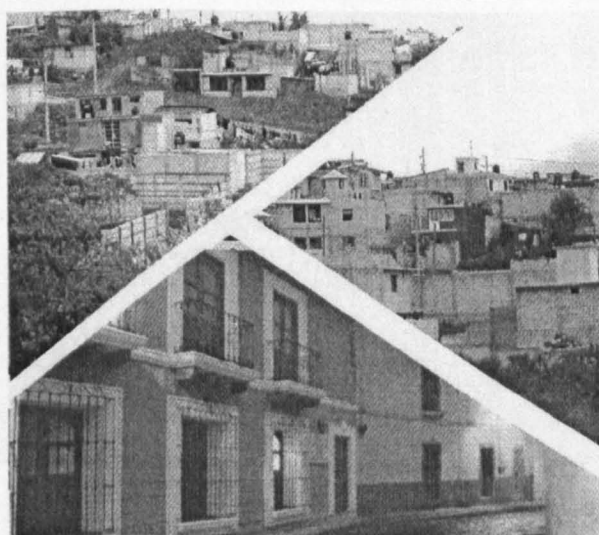
3.6 Conclusions

This chapter explains why and how a qualitative approach for the study of the dynamics of public space was used. It describes the research tools and the way that they were used in order to collect the data. Moreover, it briefly describes the fieldwork stages, the way the data was analysed and interpreted and some of the limitations experienced. The qualitative approach is used because the research seeks:

- To get first insights into social processes of transformation of public spaces in a setting which has rarely been explored, therefore first hand experience was needed through a blending of methodological techniques: interviews, observations, analysis of documents, drawings, photographs.
- It aims to explain these social and physical processes, in which people with their ideas and meanings play an important role for the investigation. Further, as these are related to their physical environment, the study had to take place in people's everyday setting.
- Moreover the study of the dynamics of transformation entail a holistic approach of analysis and explanation that cut across different themes and dimensions which could only be achieved through a qualitative approach which offers flexibility and opportunities to adapt to the nature of the context under study.

In this way, with a qualitative methodology different examples of public spaces are investigated, examining how processes of development, transformation, use and appropriation take place in the urban space of the colonias populares of Xalapa.

Chapter Four



Xalapa and its Colonias Populares

Xalapa and its Colonias Populares

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4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the urban context of the city of Xalapa from its ancient times till the present day will be explored. In order to achieve a holistic understanding of the processes of transformation of public space in the popular habitat, it is necessary to examine the context in which the research takes place. Firstly, the chapter briefly explores Xalapa's urban characteristics in history, from its origins in the pre-Hispanic period (before 1521) throughout the colonial period (until 1821), independent and republican consolidation (until 1910), up until the modern times of the 20th Century. Secondly, the chapter examines the city's urban evolution from the second half of the 20th Century when as in most Latin American cities, Xalapa experienced its massive urban peripheral growth which brought about the creation of colonias populares. Having explored these changes, the colonias populares where the study of the dynamics of public space transformation is carried out will be introduced. In this section, the chapter describes the main characteristics of these neighbourhoods including its main historical, physical and social aspects. It also introduces the public spaces on which the empirical part of this thesis takes place. Having explored these settings in the following chapters of the thesis, we will move to examine how different public spaces in these colonias are produced and consumed.



Figure 4.1 Location of the state of Veracruz

4.2 Xalapa's Urban Evolution

4.2.1 The pre-Hispanic Period

It is believed that the first settlement in Xalapa was established by Totonacas¹. Historians state that the origins of the settlement go back to 1116². Around this time, the Totonacas were dominated by indigenous groups such as Mexicas/Aztecs coming from the central *altiplano*

¹Totonacas: an indigenous group which populated the region of the Gulf of Mexico coast. It is believed that this group arrived to the region around the 8th and 9th Century. Although it is also supposed that there were some other cultures established in the area earlier. (http://www.e-mexico.gob.mx/wb2/eMex/eMex_Los_Totonacas).

² 1981, Direccion General de Asentamientos Humanos y Obras Publicas. "Plan de desarrollo urbano de Xalapa", Xalapa, Ver. Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz-Llave, H. Ayuntamiento de Xalapa, Ver.

(High plateau) who named the region as Xallapan which means “water on the sand” . This is because the area was characterized by the existence of spring waters. The settlement was formed by four indigenous barrios Xallitic (north), Techacapan (east) , Tecuanapan (west) Tlalmecapan (south) (Cerón Cortés 1998:15). Various sources affirm that within this period and later in the colonial period, the main factor that promoted its economic and consequently its physical growth was its strategic location. Xallapan was located on a strategic point linking the Gulf of Mexico and the central altiplano (today Mexico City) (Winfield Reyes 1996; Cerón Cortés 1998; Ladrón de Guevara 2002). During this time the four indigenous barrios were centres of agricultural, commercial and craft based activities. The main commercial centre was the Xallitic barrio where there was an open space which was used for commercial activities called *Tianguis*, and there were also steam baths called *Temascales* for visitors and inhabitants (Winfield Reyes 1996).

4.2.2 Colonial Consolidation

The Spaniards arrived to this part of land in 1519, on their way towards the capital city *Mexico-Tenochtitlan* in the centre of the country (Mexico City). They came from the coast of the Gulf of Mexico where they had already founded the first *ayuntamiento* (town council) called *Villa Rica de la Verdadera Cruz* (Winfield Reyes 1996). After the conquest of Tenochtitlan, the colonisers selected the barrio of Xallapan to build their dwellings. As in many other Latin American cities, they started the city development by building a monastery (founded by the Franciscans), the *plaza mayor* (main plaza), the *casa de justicia* (House of Justice), and the *calle real* (royal street) which was a branch of the *camino real* (royal road) linking Mexico city and the port of Veracruz (Bermúdez Gorrochotegui and Juárez Martínez 2001). The open space of Xallitic barrio where the tianguis took place, the Spaniards called *Plaza del Rey* (king’s plaza) and founded the main market of the city (Winfield Reyes 1996). In Xalapa the grid layout imposed by the Leyes of Indias (Laws of Indies³) could not be entirely introduced due to the uneven topography. The Spaniards, instead, laid out the colonial settlement based on the existing roads and paths consolidated by the indigenous inhabitants (Winfield Reyes 1996). As in other cities of the New Spain between 1560 and 1600 the hinterland of Xallapan was distributed among colonisers to formed the large plantations called *Haciendas* which later in the 20th Century would become *ejidal land* (Bermúdez Gorrochotegui and Juárez Martínez 2001).

³ The Law of Indies were created by Phillip II which determined the orthogonal grid layout of cities in the Spanish colonies. They were concerned with establishing orderly and efficient colonial settlements. For more information see CEHOPU (1989)

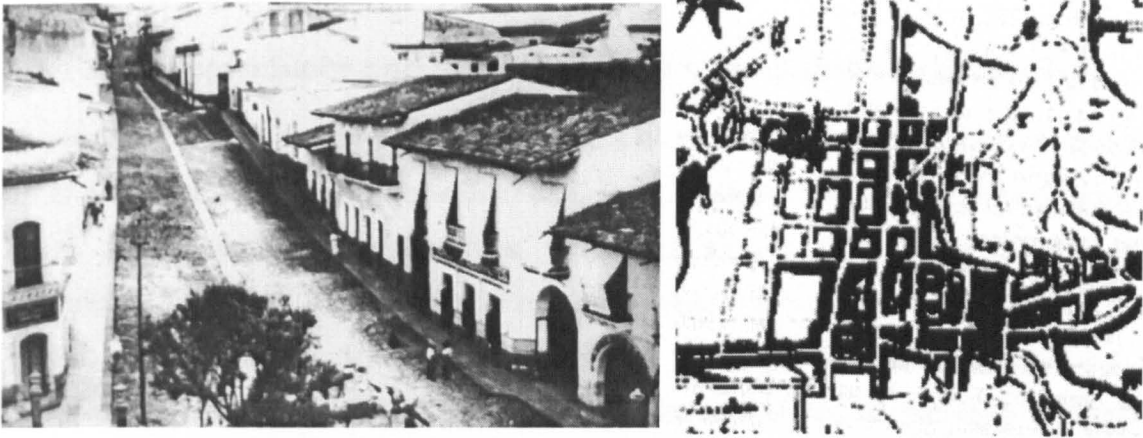


Figure 4.2 Xalapa in the 19th Century. Source: INEGI (2000) and Plan of the existing urban fabric until 1774. Source: (Ladrón de Guevara 2002)

A Dominican friar (Thomas Gage) who visited Xalapa in 1625 stated that in Xalapa there were around 2000 inhabitants of Spanish and Indian origin living in the colonial city (Bermúdez Gorrochotegui and Juárez Martínez 2001). During this period, Xalapa became a strategic commercial point on the route between Mexico City, Veracruz and Cadiz (Spain). This consolidated it as an important commercial urban centre in the Nueva España (New Spain). Around the 1720s, Xalapa was the location of one of the most important commercial ferias (fairs) in the Nueva España, which took place every year and lasted for some months (Cerón Cortés 1998). The commercial fairs took place whenever a ship from Spain arrived to Veracruz, which meant that traders from all Nueva España visited Xalapa. Eventually its intense commercial activity influenced the growth and configuration of the urban space (Ladrón de Guevara 2002). It was necessary to build a hospital, more dwellings, new barrios, new businesses, and accommodation for visitors (Winfield Reyes 1996). This urban growth followed the urban pattern of the time, where religion played a fundamental role in the formation of the structure of the city (Lopez Moreno and Ibarra Ibarra 1996). At this time, the urban development was characterized by the imposition of symbolic elements such as parishes and chapels which served as landmarks of territorial identification in the barrios (Winfield Reyes 1996). By 1791, the urban importance of the settlement was recognized by the Spanish Crown whereby King Charles the fourth declared Xalapa as a Villa (town) (Cerón Cortés 1998). At this time, it was estimated that there were 7300 inhabitants living in Xalapa, a population constituted by Spanish, mestizos, indians and mulattos (Bermúdez Gorrochotegui and Juárez Martínez 2001).

4.2.3 The Independence and the Republican Consolidation (1810-1910)

This period represents a very turbulent time in history, but did not represent an important stage of spatial or physical transformation of Xalapa. It rather represented a time of profound political and social changes uprisings, and wars against foreign invaders (War of Independence and North American and French invasions) (Winfield Reyes 1996). After the end of the war of Independence, Mexico acquired the status of federal republic and was subdivided into states. In 1824, Xalapa was declared the capital of the state of Veracruz (Cerón Cortés 1998). At this time, Xalapa had 10,628 inhabitants. However due to continuous political instability and wars, by 1863 its population decreased to 8,000 inhabitants. At that time, its barrios were congregated in 79 irregular blocks alternated with orchards and empty plots. Some streets were cobbled, the main buildings and open spaces of the city were those built in the colonial period⁴ (Bermúdez Gorrochotegui and Juárez Martínez 2001). It was not until 1873 that radical changes took place in the territory of the city with the construction of the railway by an English company which connected Mexico City and Veracruz. This fact promoted the economic development of the city and the establishment of various factories took place.

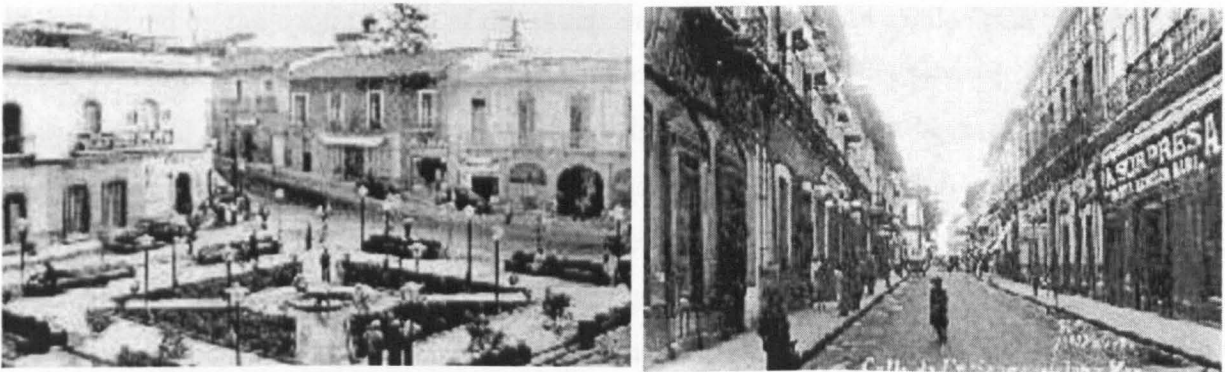


Figure 4.3 Xalapa's Central Plaza and main street at the end of the 19th Century. Source (Hernández Palacios 2000)

After the consolidation of the republican state and the expropriation of the properties owned by the religious hierarchy during the 1860's, the local authorities reinforced their actions towards the improvement of public buildings such as schools. The market and the town hall were rebuilt and open spaces were enhanced: streets were cobbled and infrastructure such as drains and lighting was set up. Plazas and gardens were also furnished with fountains and benches (Blázquez Domínguez, 2001). The creation and improvement of public spaces was

⁴ The San Francisco's monastery, San Jose's church, Calvario's chapel, Beaterios' Church, San Juan de Dios's Hospital, the town hall, and plazas del Rey and the Plaza mayor.

highly influenced by the European models. At this time the demolition of the San Francisco's Monastery took place to initiate the construction of Parque Juárez in 1885 (the main central park of the city today) (Winfield Reyes 1996). Later on, communications were also improved and the first roads linking Xalapa with neighbouring towns were built (Bermúdez Gorrochotegui and Juárez Martínez 2001).

The last two decades of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th were characterized by the urban development of Xalapa and by steady economic and demographic growth. By the end of this period, Xalapa was populated by 25 443 inhabitants. The city, apart from being characterized as a centre of commercial activity, also became an important cultural centre in the region (García Morales 2001). During this period, Mexico in general, was characterized by a continued economic progress, however its society was characterized by strong social and economical differences which provoked great social discontent and finally, in 1910 gave place to the revolution against the regime of President Porfirio Díaz⁵.

4.2.4 The 20th Century and the First Colonias

Until the beginning of the 20th Century the spatial growth of Mexican cities was characterized by the continuation of the streets and the aggregation of blocks according to the needs of urban centres (Lopez Moreno and Ibarra Ibarra 1996). This followed where possible the orthogonal grid pattern prevailing until this time. However, at the beginning of the 20th C, the first signs of massive growth and new forms of urban configuration appeared in Xalapa and in most cities of the country. This was due to various reasons; firstly, at this time, the local authorities stopped being the agent in charge of the urban growth of cities, from now on, the owners of peripheral land were the ones in charge (Lopez Moreno and Ibarra Ibarra 1996). Secondly, at the end of the revolutionary movement, numerous families living in rural areas moved to Xalapa giving origin to the first colonias such as Colonia Carrillo Puerto, Colonia del Empleado and Colonia del Maestro (Winfield Reyes, 1996). Winfield (1996) tells us that the term 'colonia' (colony) was used during the *Porfiriato* (Porfirio Díaz's administration) to designate a group of foreigners who wished to establish in rural areas. The government granted land in a model of territorial colonisation which implied the creation of low density settlements. In this way colonias were created founded by North Americans in the northern states of Chihuahua and Sonora. In the state of Veracruz, colonias were founded by French

⁵ Porfirio Díaz governed the country for 26 years (1884-1910). During this period the wealth and economic growth only benefited foreigners and a very small group of Mexicans (Díaz's friends).

and Italian migrants. However after the revolution, the term *colonia* acquired a new signification, so then it referred to the peripheral land integrated to the city and used to satisfy the demand of land for housing for the new population arriving in the city.

Lopez Moreno and Ibarra (1996) argue that the creation of *colonias* represented a watershed in the urban configuration of Mexican cities at the beginning of the 20th Century. They were the beginning of a mercantile urbanisation process and a new real estate activity characterised by new actors and new forms of interaction in the acquisition of lots and housing; accompanied by new architectural and urban statements. Morphologically, this meant the substitution of the orthogonal model of the urban fabric for new forms imported from Europe and North America (such as the Garden City). Semantically, the term '*barrio*' which implied the conventional city neighbourhood was changed for the term '*colonia*' which implied modernity. Therefore, the new ways of organizing the urban space implied new social and spatial forms of inhabiting the city. The agents promoting this new urban lifestyle presented the first *colonias* as the result of a more rational urban intervention which was necessary to confront the ills of urban living prevailing at the time. Certainly these real estate agents based their arguments on the modern principles of the epoch (Lopez Moreno and Ibarra Ibarra 1996). Apparently, these new models of urban living aimed to satisfy the new needs that modernity imposed in people's urban life. At this period, a *colonia* consisted of subdivision of land or a planned community, designed to be separated from the city. It aimed to create a new location, something different from the old *barrios*. The *colonias* were defined by their social homogeneity replacing the heterogeneity of the *barrios*, becoming mono-functional areas destined for the emerging middle class of the city. In this way, traditional streets became avenues and boulevards; detached dwellings in form of villas and chalets substituted the traditional colonial houses. The market and the church were substituted by a public garden and a park, and afterwards in the second half of the century by a commercial centre (Lopez Moreno and Ibarra Ibarra 1996). Some of the *colonias* that appeared in Xalapa in the 1950's were created this way. Examples of these are *Colonia del Empleado Federal* (Colonia of Federal Employees), *Colonia Obrero-Campesina* (Peasant-Workers Colonia) *Colonia Obreros Textiles* (Colonia of Textile Workers), *Colonia Del Maestro* (Colonia of Teachers) *Colonia Del Policia* (Colonia of Policemen).

During the first half of the century the population increased from 29 993 inhabitants in 1921 to 40 246 in 1930; to 48 827 in 1940. By 1950, there were 59 275 inhabitants in Xalapa

(Corzo Ramírez 2001). In addition, by the end of this period the economic activities of the city had also transformed from an economy based on the textile industry and the manufacturing of agricultural products to the activities that still prevail today in the city: governmental and commercial activities and services of education and health (Rodríguez 1993).

4.2.5 Urban Transformations after 1950's

By the 1950's the modern ideas of CIAM had already influenced the production of the urban space in most Mexican cities. In Xalapa, the modernity and the establishment of the school of architecture of the University of Veracruz brought about the adoption of new typologies and forms of organising the urban space (Winfield Reyes 1996). The urban landscape of the city centre was transformed by new enclosed commercial spaces and multi-storey buildings. Equally to many other cities, the demolition of great areas of the city took place to create new roads or widen the existing ones as an answer to the needs of the modernity mainly to facilitate the use of cars.

Towards the periphery a new form of urban development appeared called 'fraccionamientos'. The fraccionamiento (subdivision) was introduced as a result of the need to establish an urban order which would regulate the massive urban growth and the actions of the first real state agents, who freely dominated the growth of cities during the first half of the 20th Century (Lopez Moreno and Ibarra Ibarra 1996). In this way state authorities around the country started to introduce the first planning regulations, and established the guidelines for the fraccionamiento of the land for housing developments⁶. In the 1960's and 1970's, these regulations were declared as laws⁷ around the country. In the state of Veracruz, the Law of Human Settlements of the State of Veracruz⁸ was created in 1977 (Winfield Reyes 1996). And finally in 1979, the enactments of the rules⁹ for the creation of fraccionamientos were created. These rules imposed a zoning model, establishing the separation of land uses creating housing fraccionamientos (with different classifications: high class, middle class, social and popular), industrial fraccionamientos, and country fraccionamientos. In this way the new housing areas of the city took the name of fraccionamiento substituting the name of colonia as

⁶ In Mexico City, the regulations for the creation of new *fraccionamientos* were introduced in 1941 (Schteingart, 1989). In Guadalajara, these regulations were created in 1944. (Lopez Moreno and Ibarra Ibarra, 1996)

⁷ Ley de Fraccionamientos.

⁸ Ley de Asentamientos Humanos del Estado de Veracruz.

⁹ Reglamento para la Fusión, Subdivisión, Relotificación y Fraccionamiento de Terrenos para el Estado (Regulations for merging, subdividing and plotting land in the State).

a result of the new legal impositions. Therefore, the *fraccionamiento* became the unique legal form which produced new urban space (Lopez Moreno, 1996). For example, in Xalapa *Fraccionamiento Veracruz*, *Fraccionamiento Jardín*, *Fraccionamiento Miguel Alemán*, *Fraccionamiento Cristal*, *Fraccionamiento Ensueño*, *Fraccionamiento Jacarandas*, *Fraccionamiento Lomas del Estadio* were created. The *fraccionamientos* do not represent a particular space, neither a particular quality nor a specific social group. There are luxury and exclusive *fraccionamientos* which are the equivalent of the first colonias, as well as simple subdivisions of popular character. They are *fraccionamientos* according to the planning regulations, however the differences are established by the estate agents according to the target groups (high, middle, low-income), their location in the city and the kind of products promoted (Lopez Moreno and Ibarra Ibarra 1996).

It is important to mention that the laws of *fraccionamientos* of Veracruz (1979) already included the regulation of land subdivisions for low-income groups: ‘popular *fraccionamientos*’. This represented the rules for the construction of site and services, progressive and self-help projects introduced by many Latin American governments to satisfy the housing needs of the increasing low-income population. Therefore, around 1980, popular *fraccionamientos* were created in the periphery of Xalapa targeting low-income groups such as *Constituyentes*, *Lerdo de Tejada*, *Penascal*, *Mision San Carlos* in the east of the city, and *Revolucion*, *Popular Indeco*, *Popular Pomona* in the north. Even though many new areas of the city are known as *fraccionamientos*, the name of colonia was kept by the population and taken by the *popular groups* (low-income groups) to name the informal peripheral settlements that were modifying the urban landscape at the same time. Popular urbanization will now be examined.

4.2.6 Xalapa and its Popular Urbanization

The cities’ population and its territory grew impressively during the second half of the 20th Century. In 1950, the territory of the city was estimated about 643.9 hectares with a population of 51 109 inhabitants. In only 16 years, by 1966, the territorial area extended its boundaries by 74.8% and the population practically doubled reaching 97,062 inhabitants. In 1981, the population was estimated 214, 679. Almost twenty years later in 2000, Xalapa had 450, 550 inhabitants, by this time the territory had reached an area of 5006 hectares (Acosta 2000). (Figure 4.4)

Year	Time Span	Territorial Area			Population			
		Hectares	Growth %	Annual Growth Rate	Number Of Inhabitants	Growth %	Annual Growth Rate	Density Inhabitant Per Hectare
1950		643.9			51 109			79
1966	16	1 125.7	74%	3.6%	97 062	90%	4.1%	86
1975	9	2 115.2	87.9%	7.0%	169 185	74.3%	6.4%	80
1981	6	2 363.0	11.7%	2.0%	214 679	26.9%	4.0%	91
1990	9	4 090.9	73.12%	6.3%	317 598	47.9%	4.4%	78
1995	5	4 200.0	2.7%	0.6%	378 254	19.1%	3.6%	90
1999	4	4 838.0	15.2%	3.6%	435 735	15.2%	3.6%	90
2000	1	5 006.0	3.5%	3.6%	450 550	3.4%	3.6%	90

Figure 4.4 Population and territorial growth of Xalapa from 1950 till 2000. Source (Acosta 2000:56)

Xalapa experienced its massive urban growth mainly towards the north of the city, towards the area where the road to Mexico-Veracruz is located. In fact, the penetration of the urban fabric to rural areas is influenced by the existence of communication routes: informal settlers are people who occupy the land next to main highways (Rodriguez 1993). From the 1970's the creation of several informal settlements called colonias populares greatly extended the urban fabric. As in other cities in Mexico, the new city dwellers did not establish in peripheral settlements. Before moving to new settlements, the new comers used to live in 'vecindarios' (low-income neighbourhoods located in the city centre) with relatives or friends (Rodriguez 1993). However by 1978, 75% of the urban fabric of Xalapa occupied ejidal land (Rodriguez 1993). In this way the 'ejidos' of the northern part of the city such as Ejido Progreso Macuiltepetl, Ejido de San Roque, Ejido Rafael Lucio, Ejido Emiliano Zapata, Ejido Lucas Martin were transformed into colonias populares with the characteristics mentioned in Chapter two, such as precarious dwellings and lack of urban services. Many of these colonias kept the name of the ejido on which they were established. So then, at the beginning of the 1980's colonias such as Colonia Revolucion, Colonia Sostenes Blanco, Colonia Rafael Lucio, Colonia Progreso, Colonia Ferrocarrilera, populated the northern periphery; On the north-eastern periphery colonias such as Colonia Sumidero and Colonia Casa Blanca were created; In the north-western periphery, the city was extended with the creation of colonias such as Colonia Veracruz, Colonia Lomas del Seminario, Colonia Lomas de San Roque; towards the west, Colonia Luz del Barrio, Colonia Estibadores, Colonia Tres de Mayo were founded; and in the southern part, Colonia Martires de Chicago (Los Pinos) and Colonia Benito Juarez were established, among others. The urban environment of the colonias is described as follows by Lopez Moreno and Ibarra (1996:33):

“The promoters simply carried out a land subdivision in various plots, the majority without services, if they exist; these are very scarce and deficient. They are desolate barrios that have lost a great part of the essential characteristics of the high class colonias created at the beginning of the century. The new peripheral colonias are characterized by the disappearance of public spaces, and the reduction of habitable spaces. However, their owners manifest a clear desire to reproduce the model of the colonias, for example with alignment of the facades and frontages. Finally, above all, they use the term ‘colonia’ in order to obtain social status and an added property value, which in reality they do not possess”.

Regarding the urban consolidation and the provision of urban services of the city, after the development of a great number of colonias populares, Lopez Moreno and Diaz Betancourt (1993), affirm that towards 1980, 41% of dwellings did not have water services and 44% did not have drainage. At the end of the 1980's only the central area (the colonial historic centre) was totally paved. In the urban area surrounding the centre, approximately 50% of the streets were paved, whereas in the peripheral areas 90% of the streets were unpaved (López Moreno and Díaz Betancourt 1993). Open spaces such as green areas city parks, neighbourhood parks and sport areas, only represented an area of 70 hectares, a very small number in relation to the total urban area, and in relation to the number of inhabitants. In 1990, open spaces (green areas) only represented 1.58% of the total urban space of the city (López Moreno and Díaz Betancourt 1993).

Rodriguez (1993) affirms that in 1990, the population living in new colonias populares was of 86 506 inhabitants. Xalapa at this time had 317, 598 inhabitants. Therefore 27% of the population of Xalapa lived in colonias populares. Most colonias were created by illegal land subdivisions promoted by ‘ejidatarios’ and popular groups, who at the same time promoted legalization. Some others colonias were created under the legal figure of the ‘fraccionamiento popular’ promoted by the state government and private developers. These are not considered colonias populares because the access to land took place through the institutionalised framework. However, taking into account the physical characteristics of fraccionamientos populares, we also consider them popular settlements due to the low quality of infrastructure, few or no urban services provided, and the high rate of self-consolidation practices taking place. Sanchez Correa (1992) describes the massive popular urbanisation of the city as the model of the urban growth of Xalapa as constituted by a kind of ‘social zoning’. This is the irregular or illegal settlements in unsuitable areas but low cost housing areas which are financed by governmental agencies in order to build dwellings of ‘interes social’ (popular

fraccionamientos) that in many cases lack of paved streets and services (Sanchez Correa 1992).

The new urban dwellers came from the neighbouring municipalities and towns surrounding the central region of the state of Veracruz, towns which are primarily based on primary economic activities such as agriculture and cattle raising. Later in the city, male migrants moved to a new urban lifestyle working freelance and in informal activities such as construction workers, shoe repairers, plumbers, and carpenters; and women worked as food vendors, dressmakers, and hairdressers (Rodriguez 1993). Amante (2001) an academic who has studied the urban morphology of Xalapa describes the environment of colonias populares as follows:

It's there, where people live in the non-city. These are places where people raise chickens and pigs and also grow maize to complement the domestic economy; they can hardly be qualified as 'urban'. The land tenure is not legal and secure, whereby sometimes people are evicted. They suffer from natural disasters and if they can, they recover their ephemeral material belongings, just to start again in a new place, in the same conditions. This is the marginal city [...] people are more worried about surviving day by day than in the articulation of their territory with the rest of the city (Amante 2003:169).

It is true that colonias' residents have developed their urban life in very constraining scenarios mainly characterized by the lack of economic resources to a fully developed urban life according to the established parameters. It is also true that the majority live day by day with very little money to satisfy basic needs. However, this does not mean that colonias' inhabitants are not worried about integrating their territories to the formal urban fabric. On the contrary, as we will see in the following chapters, the improvement, consolidation and integration of the colonia's environment is one of the most important aspects in the life of popular residents.

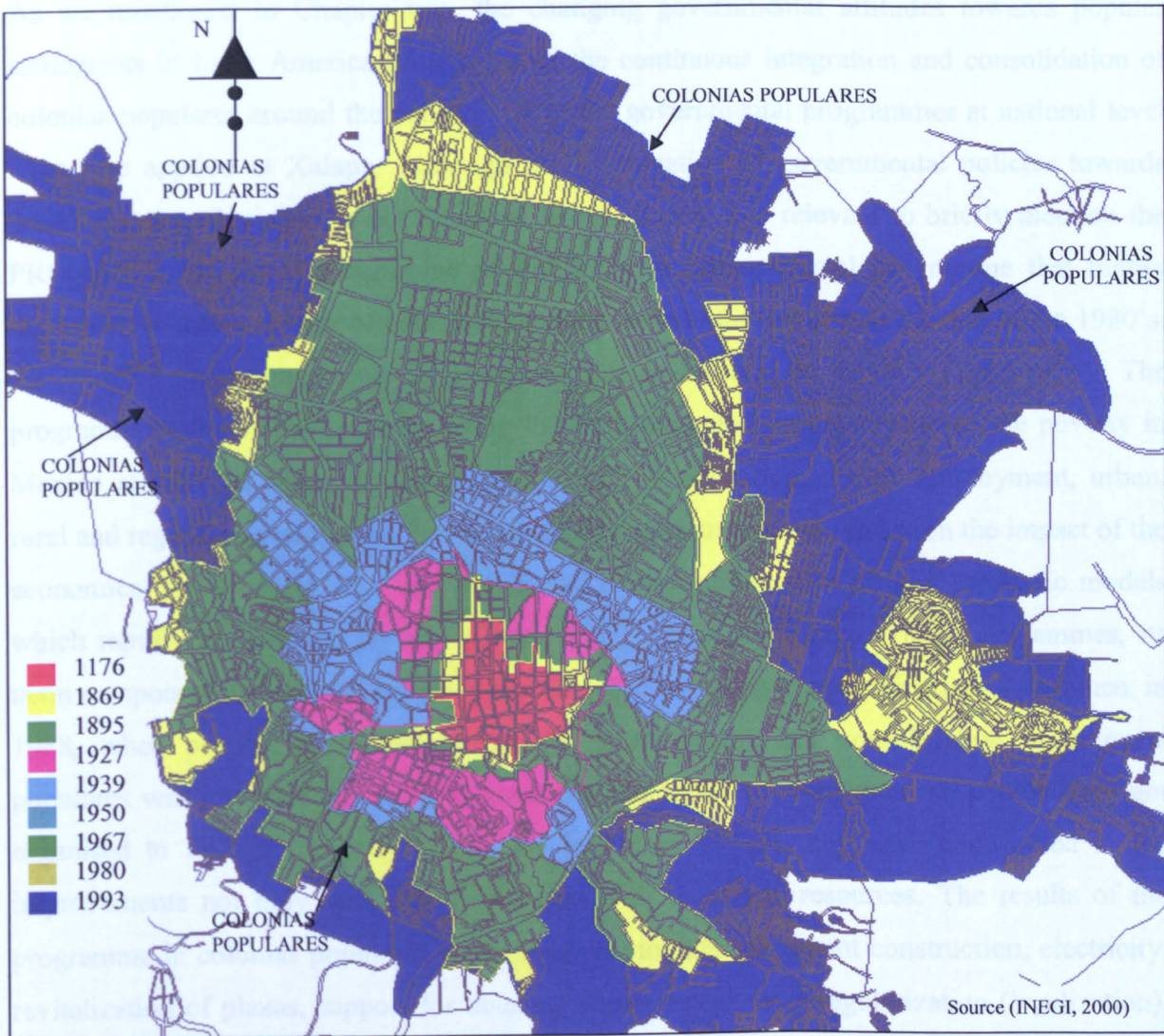


Figure 4.5 The growth of the urban fabric of the city from the colonial period till the colonias populares development which appeared from the 1960's. The colours show the limits of the city throughout years. The most consolidated colonias populares were built between 1967 and 1980 the new periphery and the least consolidated were built after 1993. It is important to compare this map to Ford's model of the Latin American City discussed in Chapter two, and see the concentric urban development of the city, although towards the north of the city centre (shown in red)

Figure 4.5A The colonias populares of the city

- **The most consolidated colonias (located in the rings created between 1967 and 1980):**

North: Colonia Aguacatal, Burocrata, Heroes Ferrocarrileros, Progreso Macuiltepec, Voceador, Lagunilla, Lomas de Boone, Arboledas del Sumidero, Empleados Federales, Hidalgo, Miguel Hidalgo, Morelos, Predio de la Virgen, 7 de Noviembre, Ampliación de la Virgen, Margarita Maza, Morelos, Lazaro Cardenas.

East: Colonia Jose Cardel, Lomas de las Americas, Maria Esther, del Policia. Laureles, Mirador, Rafael Murillo Vidal, Laureles, Independencia. Francisco Villa. Colonia Constituyentes, Lomas del Zapote, Azteca, Encinal, Lazaro Cardenas, Lerdo de Tejada, Independencia.

South: Colonia Emiliano Zapata, Isleta, Martires de Chicago (Los Pinos), Emiliano Zapata, Los Tulipanes.

Southwest: Benito Juarez, Cerro Colorado, Cienega, Estibadores, San Bruno, 3 de Mayo, Villareal, Salud, El Porvenir, Represa del Carmen.

- **The least consolidated colonias (located in the ring between 1980 and 1993)**

North: Colonia 21 de Marzo, Naranjal, Carolino Anaya, Vasconcelos, del Periodista, Pabello Acosta, Sostenes Blanco, Tabasco, Rafael Lucio, Colonia Revolucion, El Periodista

Northeast: Colonia Casa Blanca, Las Aguilas, America, Sumidero, Las Minas, Miradores, El Porvenir, Tanque, La Union, 28 de Agosto.

Northwest: Colonia Los Encinos, Framboyanes, Lomas de San Roque, Lomas de Chapultepec, Lomas del Seminario, Luz del Barrio, Ninos Heroes, El Pocito, Hernandez Ochoa, Veracruz, Ruben Jaramillo, Une PRI, Unidad y Progreso, Usisver.

Southwest: Benito Juarez, Adalberto Tejeda, Belisario Domínguez, Buena Vista, Encinal, Reforma, Venustiano Carranza, Murillos Vidal Sur, Guadalupe Rodríguez,

West: Colonia Arroyo Blanco

4.2.7 Governmental Actions in Colonias

As we mentioned in Chapter two, the changing governmental attitudes towards popular settlements in Latin America brought about the continuous integration and consolidation of colonias populares around the country. Different governmental programmes at national level were also applied in Xalapa. Although the examination of governmental policies towards urban poverty alleviation is not the focus of this thesis, it is relevant to briefly mention the PRONASOL (National Programme of Solidarity) a governmental programme that highly impacted the improvement of colonias populares around the country at the end of the 1980's. PRONASOL was introduced by President Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994). The programme was characterized for being the first integrated programme to tackle poverty in Mexico at national level, including aspects such as education, health, employment, urban, rural and regional development. It was introduced as an urgent plan to lessen the impact of the economical crisis of the '80s' and the impact of the introduction of new economic models which rapidly accentuated poverty (Garza 2003). Different from previous programmes, its main component and instrument for implementation was people's participation. It was then, in 1988, when peoples' participation for the improvement and consolidation of colonias populares was integrated in national governmental policies. From then on, people have got organised to form community boards for improvement and they have contributed to the improvements not only with labour but also with economic resources. The results of the programme in colonias populares were: street paving and pavement construction, electricity, revitalization of plazas, support for housing improvement, land regularization (legalization), as well as the maintenance and improvement of roads (Garza 2003).



Figure 4.6 Bandstands were built in various colonias at the beginning of the 1990's

With PRONASOL, people had to assume the idea that they were agents of their own development and forget the idea that the government was the only one carrying out improvements. Urban intervention had to be proposed by the community rather than by the government. Community boards had to be created democratically and clientalist practices had to be avoided¹⁰ (Salinas de Gortari 2002). In this way, through the PRONASOL, administered by the state and local authorities, most of the colonias populares existing at that time started the long path towards urban integration. As in most cities of the country, in Xalapa, many colonias became legalized, residents received property titles, and the introduction of services, such as water, electricity and drainage took place. Further, urban facilities, such as schools and community clinics were built in some colonias. Regarding public spaces, streets were paved and pavements were built, as well as some neighbourhood parks with bandstands. All these works were carried out with the participation of colonias' inhabitants. Taking into account the number of colonias and the high levels of urban underdevelopment and poverty, this programme only represented the beginning of many colonias' urban consolidation. Since then, the improvement and integration of colonias populares through the participation of people has been one of the main instruments of urban governmental policies at all levels. Nowadays, colonias' residents are less required to cooperate with labour, only in the works that do not require high expertise such as digging for the introduction of water and drainage pipes. Pavements and streets are now built by construction companies and the participation of people has been reduced to an economic contribution. These dynamics will be explored in the next chapters since the main scope of the thesis is the examination of public space transformation of the colonias populares. In these dynamics the initiative and participation of colonias' people play a significant role in the urban consolidation and transformation of public spaces.

4.3 Five colonias to explore public space transformation

Having explored Xalapa's urban growth and development, the colonias where this investigation is carried out will now be briefly described. These colonias are Colonia Revolucion, Colonia Los Pinos (Mártires de Chicago), Colonia Constituyentes, Colonia Ferrocarrilera and Colonia Tres de Mayo. Later, in the following chapters of the research

¹⁰ This did not happen; the programme was used as political platform for many local authorities and politicians. Frequently the money was misused in electoral purposes and clientalist practices continued. For more information on this programme see (Garza 2003:82; Salinas de Gortari 2002; SHCP 1992).

public space dynamics of transformation will be explored through different examples in the colonias of Xalapa.

4.3.1 Colonia Revolucion

Colonia Revolucion is located on the northern periphery of Xalapa. It is one of the biggest colonias of Xalapa with a population of 16 350 inhabitants (INEGI 2000b). It is located on the terrains of what it used to be in the 19th Century, Hacienda Lucas Martin. In the first half of the 20th Century, after the Mexican Revolucion, this area became Ejido Lucas Martin. The urbanization process of this area reflects the patterns of popular urbanization. According to the first settlers of the colonia, the ejidatarios of Lucas Martin started to illegally plot the area and sell the land to new city dwellers at the end of the 1970s. However, in 1979, governmental intervention prevented the ejido becoming an informal settlement because the state government expropriated the land in order to develop a site and services project or 'fraccionamiento popular'¹¹. This new colonia would house poor urban dwellers who were settled on dangerous ravines or on ecologically protected areas in other parts of the city. The state government, through its Office of Patrimony¹², defined the urban configuration and plot subdivision of the new colonia. In this way, colonia Revolucion was constituted in 18 sections with 2707 plots. The form of the settlement does not keep the common orthogonal grid, partly because Xalapa is characterised by a very irregular terrain; also in the case of Colonia Revolucion, although the area where the colonia is located does not have drastic topographical changes, the designers of the settlement tried to adapt the settlement to the topographical conditions¹³. This explains the position of the blocks and the curved form of some of the streets. (Figure 4.7)

The plots of the colonia were sold at very low prices to popular groups and employees working in the public sector. However, initially many plots were not occupied due to the lack of services of the colonia. Many of the civil servants and employees who had initially bought the plots lived in central areas of the city renting or already owning a property, thus they did not have the urgent need of a plot in Colonia Revolucion.

¹¹ Source of Information: Plano General de la Colonia Revolucion (no dated) Direccion General de Patrimonio del Estado. Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz-Llave.

¹² The State's offices in charge of territorial planning in Veracruz, part of the Secretary of Regional Development.

¹³ This information comes from an interview with the engineer in charge of the settlement lay out, who worked at the State Planning Office when Colonia Revolucion was planned.

Since plots were empty, many were invaded by 'paracaidistas' (squatters) organised in different popular groups¹⁴. Eventually, the state government allowed squatters to remain in the colonia and the initial owners lost their properties. According to the residents, squatters played an important role in populating the colonia which was empty during the first years. In common with other colonias, this neighbourhood was also the prey of corrupted leaders, politicians and authorities who shape the urban processes of the colonia through invasions, trading and exchanging plots.

Nowadays the colonia presents high rates of urban consolidation in terms of urban services, such as transport, electricity, telephone, and water. It has various schools (two primary schools, two secondary schools and a high school) a community clinic and one private clinic. It has six neighbourhood parks, three with basketball courts, a football field and a church. The main street of the colonia has developed a dynamic commercial centre in the area. In the last few years many streets have been paved, however about 50% still remained unpaved. Neighbourhood parks have also been improved during the last decade with pavements and paths, basic urban furniture such as benches and playground equipment have also been set up.

Regarding the improvement of housing, a mixture of different rates of consolidation is observed, the majority of the housing stock of the colonia have already been built with permanent materials. Some of them have reached very high levels of consolidation with two levels, and high quality materials. From these dwellings, it can be seen that the colonia has gone through a gentrification process through which many initial residents have sold their properties to more affluent families. However, there are still dwellings built with temporary materials (approximately 5%) or which are in transition from temporal to permanent consolidation.

The research draws on material from various public spaces located in Colonia Revolucion. The main public spaces of the colonia examined in the thesis are Jovita Park, Zumarraga Street and Paseos de Xalapa Street. However we draw to a lesser extent, on other neighbourhood parks and streets such as Solidaridad Park and Atenas Veracruzana Street, Ciudad de Las Flores, Isabela Catolica, and Pedro de Alvarado Streets.

¹⁴ This is common in colonias populares and happens in new settlements where initially not all plots are occupied therefore people in need of a property take advantage and appropriate the empty plots.

Figure 4.7

Colonia Revolucion

Population: 16 358
Men: 7 700
Women: 8 658
Econ. active pop. 6 646

Dwellings: 3 878
Dwellings built with Temporary Materials: 214

INEGI (2000)

Urban Facilities:
1 Community Clinic,
2 Primary schools,
2 Secondary schools,
1 High school,
2 Kindergartens,
1 Church
1 Commercial Street

Public spaces:
Jovita Park,
Solidaridad Park,
Pedro Alvarado Park ,
Detecto Playground,
Jose Iglesias Court,
Football field.



C. DE LAS FLORES STREET



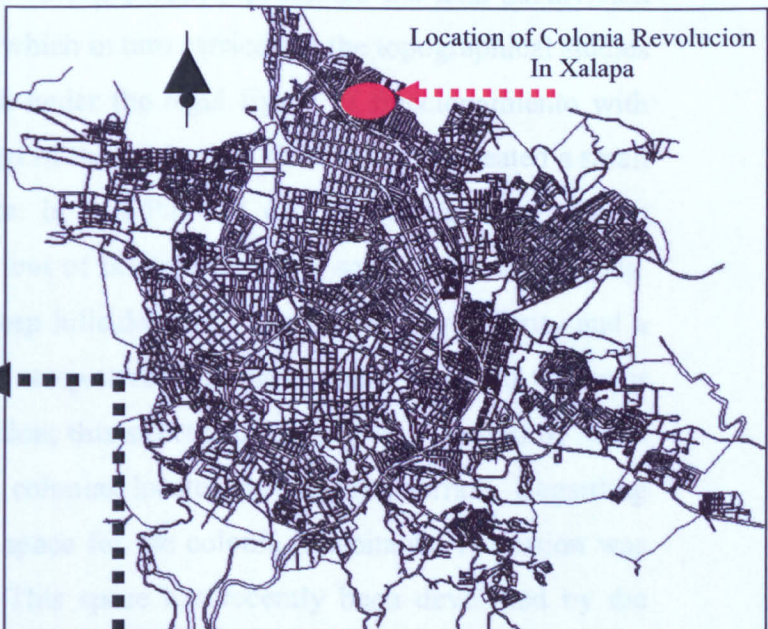
JOVITA'S PARK



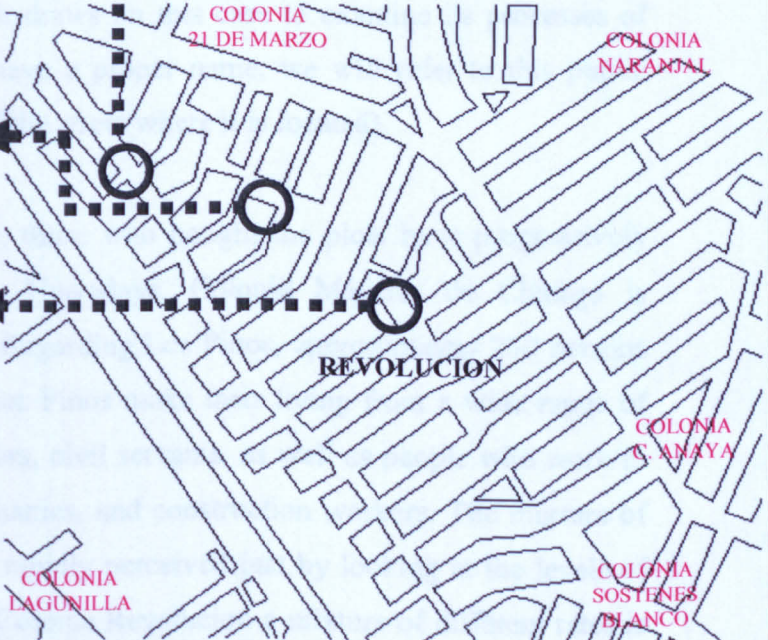
SOLIDARIDAD'S PARK



DWELLING TYPES



Location of Colonia Revolucion In Xalapa



4.3.2 Colonia Los Pinos (Mártires de Chicago)

Colonia Los Pinos (Mártires de Chicago) has a short history. It was created in 1991 on a hillside in the southern periphery of the city. The area where this colonia is settled was owned by an individual who promoted the extension of Colonia Mártires de Chicago creating Colonia Los Pinos. At that time, the owner of this property promoted the land subdivision before the Office of Patrimony of the State, which in turn carried out the topographical studies and developed the plan of the new colonia under the legal figure of fraccionamiento with popular characteristics. In this way, the owner of the land called 'El Recuerdo' created a small colonia of 58 plots distributed in 4 blocks. In Los Pinos it can be distinguished that an orthogonal pattern was followed in the lay out of the settlement in spite of the topography. Even though the colonia is located on a steep hillside the attempts to keep regularity and a grid lay out was maintained and has created steep streets. In one of these access to vehicular traffic is impossible due to the high inclination; this street became a route accessed by stairs as has happened in many other peripheral colonias located on irregular terrain. Regarding public spaces (apart from streets) a public space for the colonia inhabitants' recreation was located on the margins of the settlement. This space has recently been developed by the residents as a playground, and our research draws on this case to examine its processes of transformation. Since the space does not have a proper name, we will refer to this public space as Mascarenas Park (after the name of the street where it is located).

As with other colonias of the same nature, those who bought the plots have progressively introduced the necessary urban services. Nowadays, Colonia Mártires de Chicago is populated by 2813 people (INEGI 2000b). Regarding Los Pinos, approximately 250 persons live in this extension. The inhabitants of Los Pinos make their living from a wide range of different activities; there are teachers, doctors, civil servants, as well as people who work in informal activities such as carpenters, mechanics, and construction workers. The mixture of different incomes among the inhabitants is rapidly perceived just by looking at the levels of consolidation of the houses. Similar to the Colonia Revolucion a mixture of different rates is observed: two level, and one level houses, a mixture of temporary and permanent materials being used, and also houses completely consolidated with high quality finishes (figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8

Colonia Los Pinos (Mártires de Chicago)

Population: 2 813
Men: 1 314
Women: 1 499
Econ. active pop. 1 179

Urban Facilities in Mártires de Chicago
1 Church
1 Primary School

Public Spaces:

Mascarenas Park



Dwellings: 725
Dwellings built with Temporary Materials: 57
INEGI(2000)

Urban facilities in Los Pinos: None



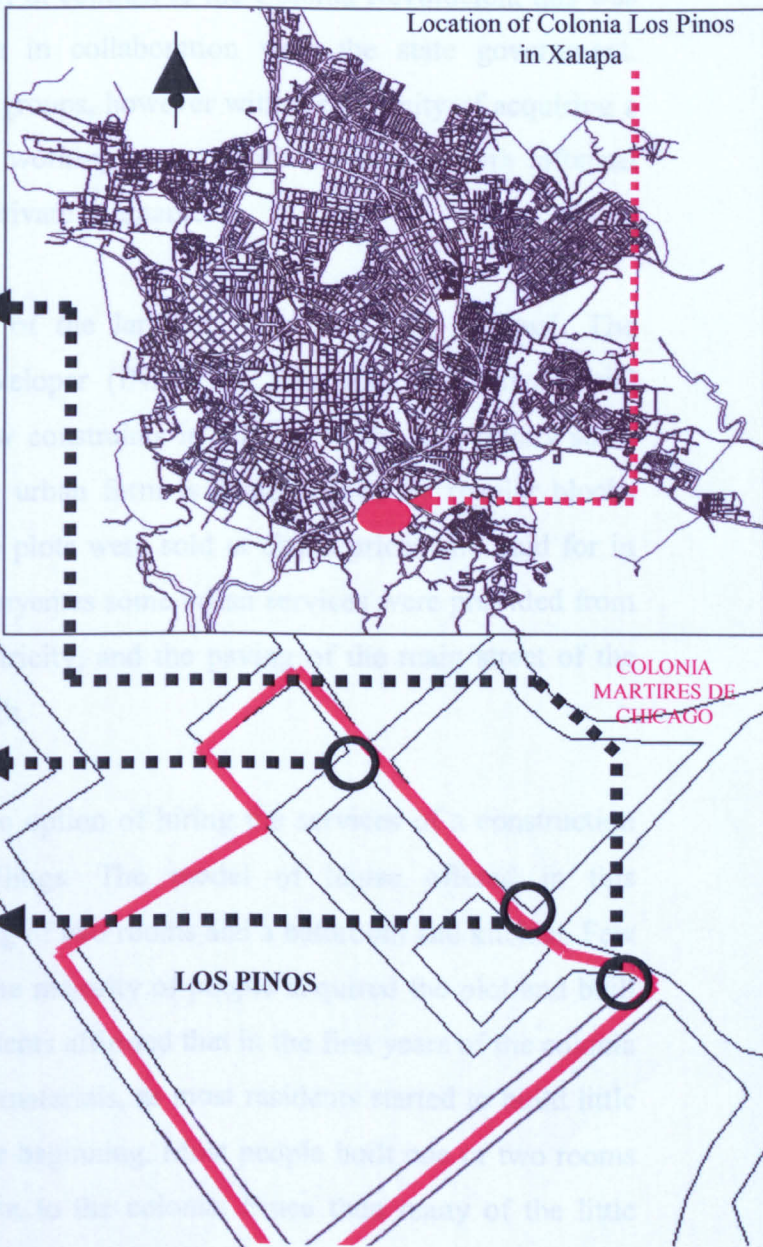
MASCARENAS' PUBLIC SPACE



MASCARENAS' STREET



DWELLING TYPES



4.3.3 Colonia Constituyentes

Colonia Constituyentes is also known as fraccionamiento Popular Constituyentes. It is located in the eastern periphery of the city. It was planned in 1980 by a governmental agency called INDECO¹⁵. This is another example of the site and services that took place in Xalapa at the same time as Colonia Revolucion. However, in contrast to the Colonia Revolucion, this was promoted by a national public institution in collaboration with the state government. Constituyentes was planned for low income groups, however with the capacity of acquiring a plot through legal means. The buyers were working class people working in both informal and formal economy in the public sector or private companies.

The fraccionamiento was created as part of the land of 'Hacienda Las Animas'. The settlement layout was defined by the developer (INDECO) following the conventional orthogonal grid. In this place there were few constraints in relation to the topography since most of the terrain is flat, so the resulting urban form is characterized by regular blocks (Figure 4.9). As in Colonia Revolucion, the plots were sold at cheap prices and paid for in convenient instalments. However, in Constituyentes some urban services were provided from the beginning such as water, drainage, electricity, and the paving of the main street of the colonia to allow public transport to go through.

In addition to this, the new dwellers had the option of hiring the services of a construction company which would build their dwellings. The model of house offered in this neighbourhood was very basic only consisting of two rooms and a bathroom and kitchen. Few houses were built within this framework. The majority of people acquired the plot and built their dwellings through self-help. Older residents affirmed that in the first years of the colonia not many houses were built with temporary materials, as most residents started to build little dwellings with permanent materials from the beginning. Most people built one or two rooms with bricks and concrete and then moved in to the colonia. Since then many of the little houses which were initially built have been transformed and consolidated. Further, the colonia has been highly gentrified and middle class families have arrived. Nowadays, a wide range of people live in the colonia. (Figure 4.9)

¹⁵ Instituto Nacional para el Desarrollo de la Comunidad y Vivienda Popular-National Institute for Community Urban Development and Popular Housing.

Figure 4.9

Colonia Constituyentes

Population: 3 383
Men: 1 566
Women: 1 817
Econ. active pop. 1 417

Urban Facilities:
1 Secondary School
1 kindergarten
1 Church
1 Municipal Office

Public Spaces:
2 Vacant plots

Dwellings: 827
Dwellings built with
Temporary Materials: 13
INEGI(2000)

CHURCH



APATZINGAN STREET



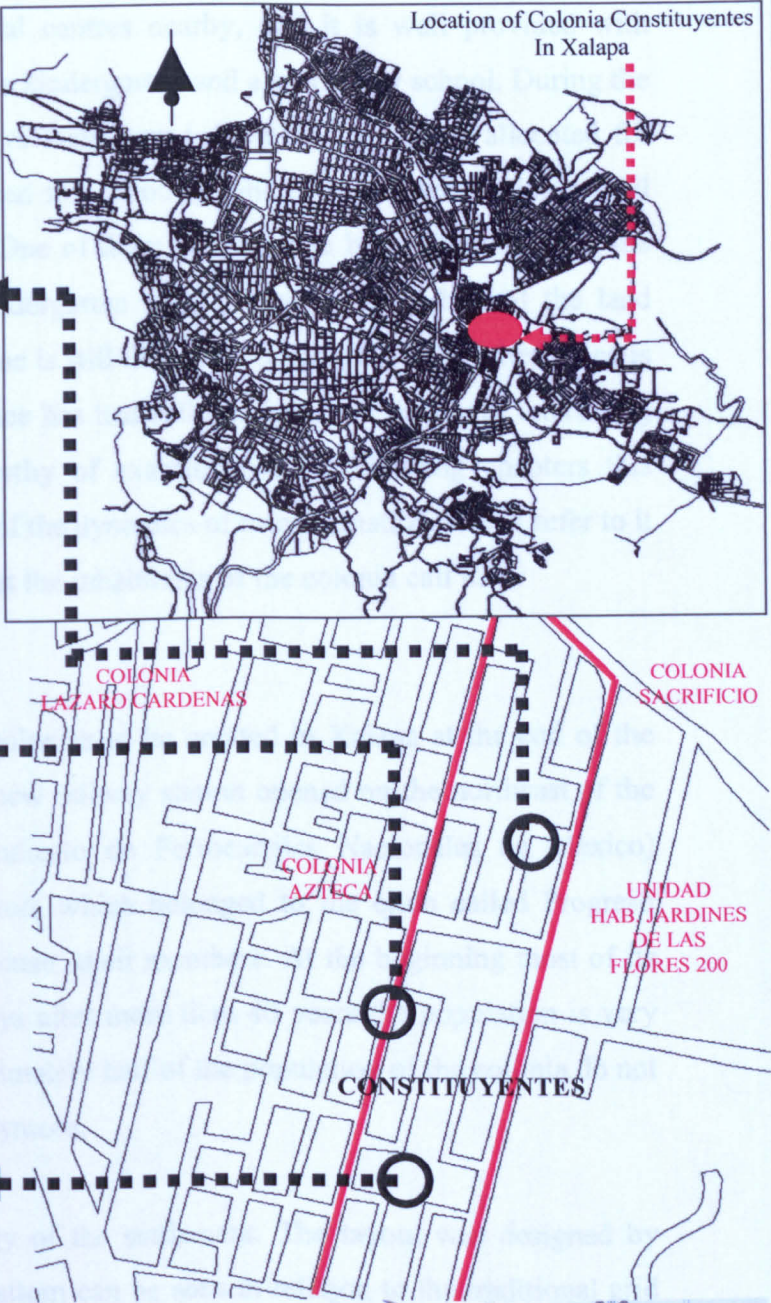
CONSTITUYENTES STREET



VACANT OPEN SPACE



DWELLING TYPES



There are people living in this colonia who work in informal activities such as construction, as well as professionals and employees with much higher incomes. This is also observed through the significant contrasts in the levels of dwelling consolidation.

Currently, the colonia presents high levels of urban consolidation. The colonia is well serviced; there are schools and commercial centres nearby, and it is well provided with transport. In the colonia, there is a church, a kindergarten and a secondary school. During the last 10 years, up to 90% of the streets have been paved. In relation to areas allocated for public uses, there were three spaces allocated for various public facilities, which were well located in central areas of the settlement. One of them was used to build the church of the colonia; another one was used for the kindergarten which only occupied half of the land leaving the other half vacant, and the last one is still free as an open space. The latter space is the one that this thesis focuses on. The space has had little intervention; however interesting dynamics are taking place which are worthy of examination. In following chapters this example will be drawn on to discuss some of the dynamics of transformation. It will refer to it as 'Constituyentes green area' as this is what the inhabitants of the colonia call it.

4.3.4 Colonia Ferrocarrilera

Colonia Ferrocarrilera is one of the first colonias to be created in Xalapa at the end of the 1950s. The colonia was created after the new railway station opened on the northeast of the city. The union of railway workers (Sindicato de Ferrocarriles Nacionales de Mexico) acquired the surrounding land of the station, which belonged to the ejido called Progreso Macuiltepec, in order to provide land to house their members. At the beginning most of its inhabitants were railway workers, nowadays after more than 40 years the population is very diverse. According to the residents approximately half of the population of the colonia do not have any link with the railway company anymore.

It is interesting to look at the morphology of the settlement. The layout was designed by professionals and a completely different pattern can be seen in relation to the traditional grid pattern which prevailed until the first half of the 20th Century. In Colonia Ferrocarrilera the introduction of new forms can be seen in the creation of new urban areas. This is as a result of the modernist influence in the city that took place around the 1950s, and the creation of new areas called colonias instead of traditional barrios (Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.10

Colonia Ferrocarrilera

Population: 2 922
Men: 1 327
Women: 1 595
Econ. active pop. 1 201

Dwellings: 775
 Dwellings built with
 Temporary Materials: 5
 INEGI(2000)

Urban Facilities:
 2 Primary School
 2 kindergartens
 1 Secondary School
 1 High School
 1 Church

Public Spaces:
 Villahermosas's Park
 Norte 9- Green area



VILLAHERMOSAS PARK



SUR 8 STREET



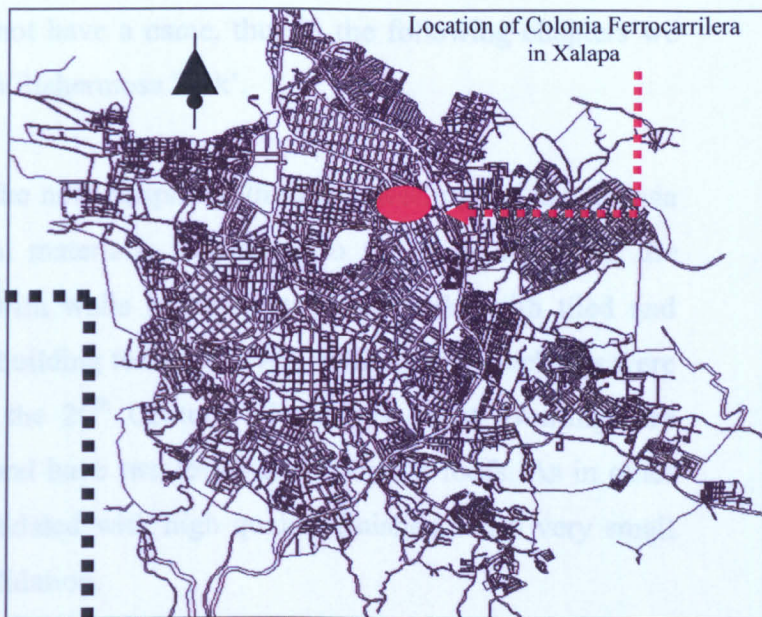
VILLAHERMOSA STREET



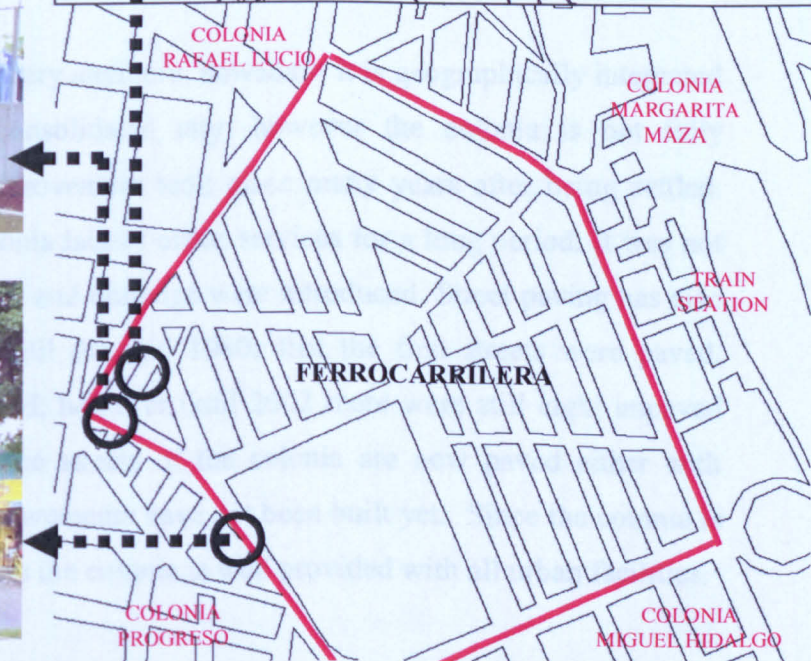
PRIMARY SCHOOL



DWELLING TYPES



Location of Colonia Ferrocarrilera in Xalapa



COLONIA RAFAEL LUCIO

COLONIA MARGARITA MAZA

TRAIN STATION

FERROCARRILERA

COLONIA PROGRESO

COLONIA MIGUEL HIDALGO

As other colonias populares, Colonia Ferrocarrilera was legalized and planned by the State Office of Patrimony. Four spaces for communal facilities and public spaces were left. In two of these spaces schools were built in the big empty area located in the middle of the settlement. In the other two spaces which are located in the margins of the neighbourhood, two parks were built. The thesis is only focused on one neighbourhood park which is located in Villahermosa Street. The space does not have a name, thus in the following chapters we will refer to this neighbourhood park as 'Villahermosa Park'.

In contrast to the colonias populares of the new periphery, the first dwellings of the colonia Ferrocarrilera were built with traditional materials. According to the older residents, the railway workers built small dwellings with walls of masonry (stonework) with tiled and wooden roofs which followed traditional building techniques with which most dwellings were built until the end of the first half of the 20th Century. Nowadays, most dwellings are consolidated with the modern materials and have two levels and concrete roofs. As in other colonias there are dwellings fully consolidated with high quality finishes and a very small number of houses with low rates of consolidation.

The colonia is not located on the periphery anymore, nowadays it is geographically integrated into what can be considered the consolidated city; however the colonia is not fully consolidated. Its process of urban improvement took place many years after being settled. According to the all residents, the colonia lacked urban services for a long period. It was not until 1975, when services such as water and drainage were introduced. Street paving has also been slowly introduced; it was not until the mid 1980s that the first streets were paved. Nowadays most of the streets are paved; however until 2002 there were still eight unpaved streets. Thus approximately 80% of the streets of the colonia are now paved either with concrete or tarmac, although in some pavements have not been built yet. Since the colonia is located in a more central area, nowadays the colonia is well provided with all urban facilities.

4.3.5 Colonia Tres de Mayo

Colonia Tres de Mayo is located in the west periphery of the city. The population of the colonia is 1507 inhabitants (INEGI 2000b). It was created in 1962 by a group of construction workers. However the area where this colonia is located had already been populated since the 1900s when the first railway station of Xalapa was located nearby in 1907. In this way the first settlements of the area were developed informally, firstly by railway workers during the

first half of the 20th Century, and later on by different informal land subdivisions carried out by the owners and peasants living in the area. Part of the area used to be a swamp and a local leader, illegally appropriated the land, filled and levelled the terrain and sold the plots. In this way, through informal means, the colonias of this area of the city were created. The layout of the settlements of this area was defined by an organic process of accretion, and by the difficult topography of the area. Therefore the colonias established on this land are characterised by very steep routes only accessible by stairs. Some streets are very narrow, and curved and many dwellings are built on steep hillsides.

Colonia Tres de Mayo was developed by a group of 300 construction workers, who promoted the land subdivision on the terrains known as 'Coapexpan' and 'Arroyo Blanco'. The land subdivision was authorized by the governor of the state; however the legalization of the colonia did not take place until 1980. After legalization the initial urban improvements and services provision took place (Capitanachi, et al. 2001). Since the colonia was developed on areas which were not suitable for housing due to the hilly and uneven terrain the introduction of urban services has been difficult.

The first ten years poor people inhabited the colonia, however with the different improvements and urban consolidation the area has also been gentrified. Initially, most dwelling were built with temporary materials, however many of the first settlers traded their plots and new residents with higher incomes have moved to the colonia, building dwellings of higher quality. Nowadays, there are still some peasants and construction workers living in the area but the area is now characterized by mixture of dwellers who work in different occupations. The majority of the dwellings have reached consolidation with permanent materials and some new and well finished houses are also seen in this colonia. (Figure 4.11)

During its urban consolidation different services have been introduced. The primary school was established in small rooms with temporary material about twenty five years ago. Residents built the church of the colonia. Later on the local authorities also set up a community clinic. Electricity, drainage and water were introduced at the beginning of the 1980's. The streets have been slowly improved and today 70% of the streets are paved.

Figure 4.11

Colonia Tres de Mayo

Population: 1 507
Men: 702
Women: 805
Econ. active pop. 640

Dwellings: 374
Dwellings built with
Temporary materials: 34
INEGI (2000)

Urban Facilities:
1 Secondary School
1 Primary School
1 Church
1 Community Clinic

Public Space:
Colonias Unidas Park

CHURCH



COLONIA TRES DE MAYO



COLIMA STREET



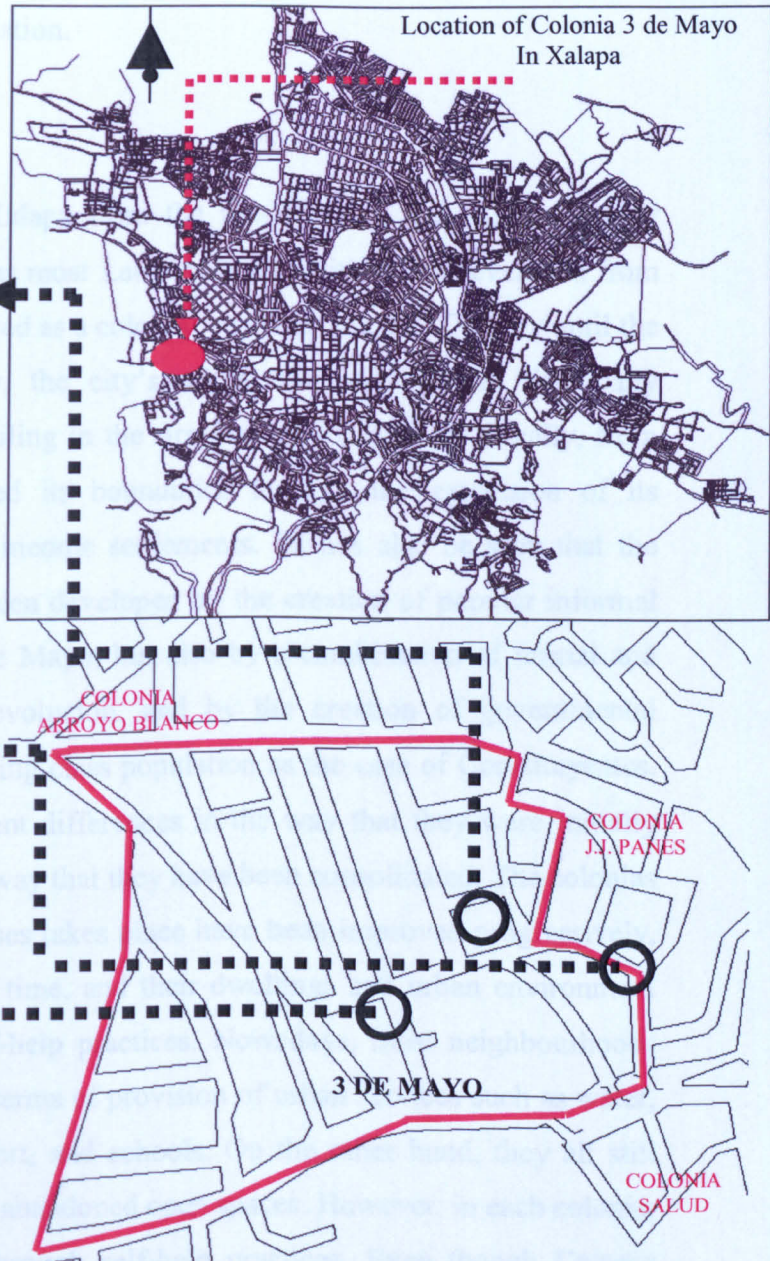
YUCATAN STREET



SECONDARY SCHOOL



DWELLING TYPES



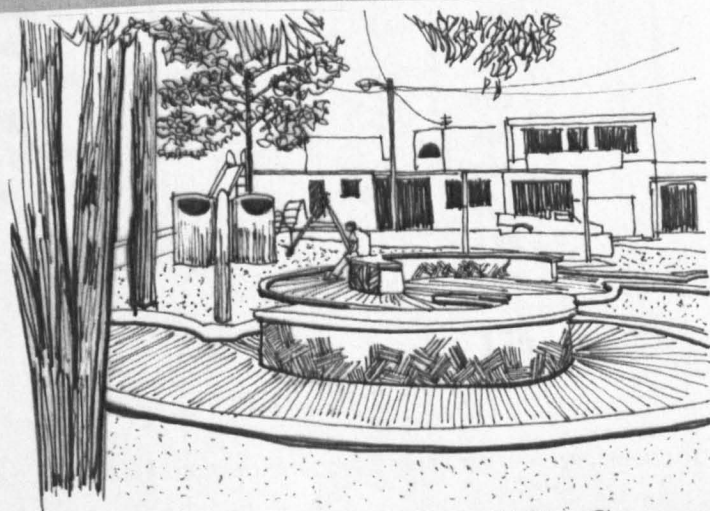
In relation to spaces for urban facilities, there were two big open spaces left in the colonia located on the low areas, on swampy terrain. One was used to build the primary school, and part of the other one was used to build a secondary school. The rest of the land (5000 square meters) was left empty. Until very recently this space was a football field, however in 2000 the municipality built Colonias Unidas Park. This is the public space which this thesis draws on to explore the dynamics of its transformation.

4.4 Conclusions

In this chapter the urban evolution of Xalapa from the pre-Hispanic age till its popular urbanization has been examined. Xalapa, as most Latin American cities, has developed from an indigenous settlement. Later on, it evolved as a colonial city from the 16th Century until the 19th Century. Then in the 20th Century, the city's urban environment was drastically transformed with the modern trends prevailing in the first half of the century. Finally, from the second half, it dramatically extended its boundaries through the expansion of its periphery, mostly by the creation of low-income settlements. It has also been seen that the urban periphery of the city has not only been developed by the creation of popular informal settlements as the case of Colonia Tres de Mayo, but also by a combination of formal and informal procedures such as Colonia Revolucion, and by the creation of governmental housing projects for low-income and working class population as the case of Constituyentes. Although it is true that the colonias present differences in the way that they were initially created, they do present similarities in the way that they have been consolidated. The colonias where the research of public space processes takes place have been improved progressively, urban services have been introduced over time, and their dwellings and urban environment have been mostly developed through self-help practices. Nowadays, most neighbourhoods boast high rates of urban consolidation in terms of provision of urban services such as water, electricity, drainage, paved streets, transport, and schools. On the other hand, they all still have some unpaved streets, and vacant and abandoned open spaces. However, in each colonia, public spaces have also been improved through self-help practices. Even though Colonia Ferrocarrilera has been geographically integrated to the urban fabric of the city, and is now surrounded by new peripheral colonias, some parts of its urban space are still undeveloped. In the next three chapters, it will be seen how the residents of these colonias populares have interacted physically and socially to improve and transform the public space of these colonias

at different times during their consolidation process. The next chapter will start by examining public space development process.

Chapter Five



The Production of Public Space

The Production of Public Space

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5.1 Introduction

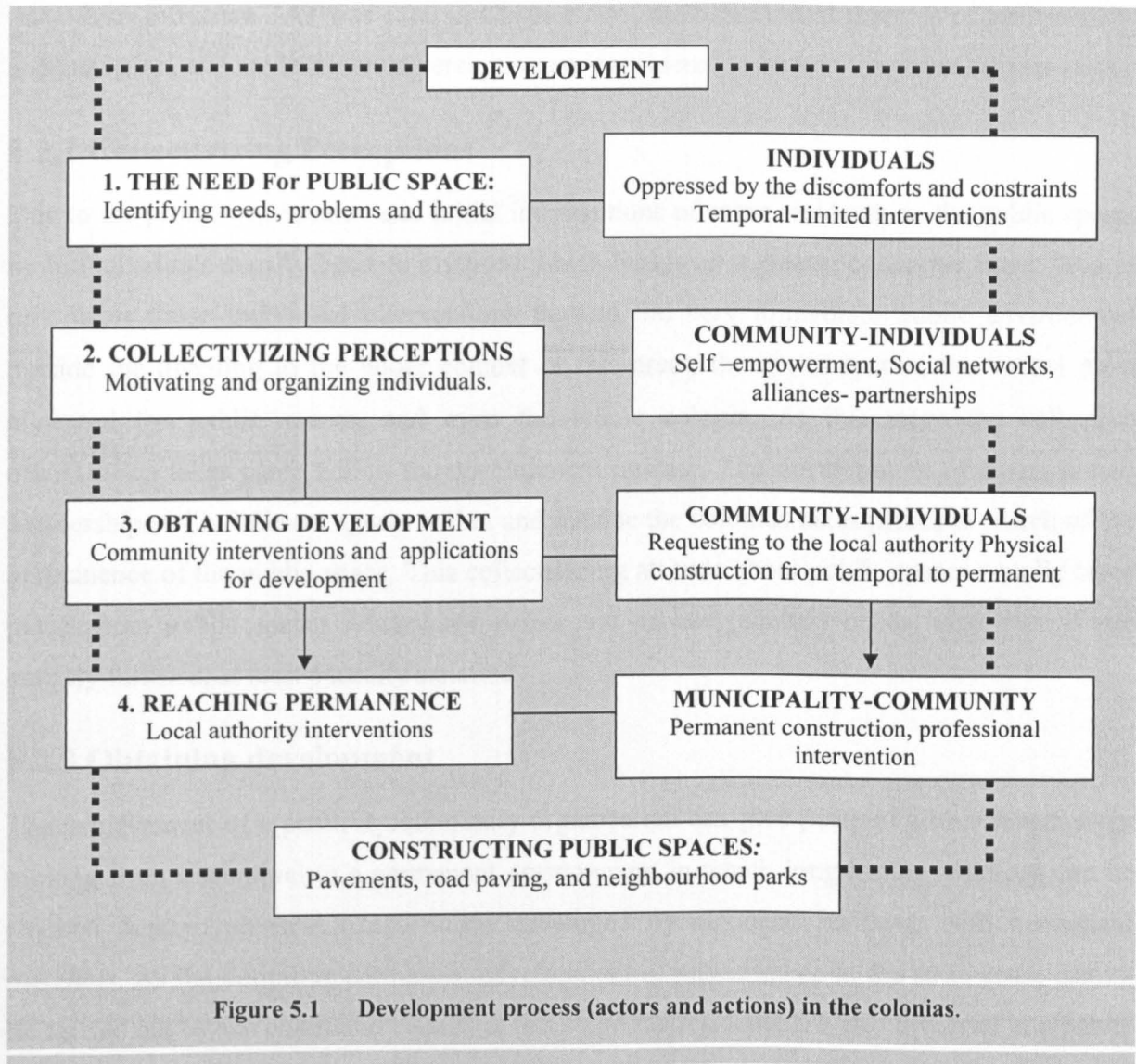
The main purpose of this chapter is to present the process of the development of public space in the colonias populares of Xalapa. Drawing on different parks and streets located in the five colonias presented in the previous chapter; this chapter analyses how the public space of the colonias is socially produced. This chapter will describe and scrutinize the different aspects that foster and constrain the existence of public space in colonias populares and will look at the different stages and challenges that stakeholders have to overcome in order to get the public space developed.

The chapter tackles how the stakeholders initiate, carry out and sustain the process of development within and outside the colonias' environment. The main objective is to examine the actors, their roles and social interactions, and the negotiations, decision-making, and conflicts which take place during the production process. Firstly, the chapter studies the constraints over the land allocated for parks and playground spaces. Then, the different actions undertaken by colonias residents to overcome constraints are examined. The chapter also explores how key actors ignite the interest of the community around their public space and how organization is achieved. Attention is also given to how residents of the colonias initiate the development of public spaces, through their direct physical interventions on the spaces, and how at the same time undertake and negotiate development with the local authorities to reach the full consolidation and permanence of their public spaces.

5.2 The development process

Keeping in mind the diversity of the urban dynamics in the production of popular settlements, in which the urban consolidation is immersed, the classification and categorization of the development of the public space in colonias populares is not an easy task. The development of public spaces takes place all the way from the beginning until the end of the consolidation of the settlement through individual or collective interventions. This can be through spontaneous or systematic actions, and through temporary or permanent interventions, depending on the social, economical, political capital available to colonias' residents. The development process can take different paths with fostering and constraining agents, which encourage or limit the different phases. However, similar basic components within this process may be identified, according to the actors involved, their actions and the extent of their physical interventions.

This chapter is an exhaustive analysis of the different aspects that give shape to the development of the public space in the colonias populares of Xalapa. (Figure 5.1)



5.2.1 Identifying needs, problems and threats

Firstly, the residents of colonias identify the different needs, problems, and threats that impinge on their immediate public space. At this stage, individuals oppressed by discomforts and constraints, struggle for the development of a healthier life. Individual interventions on streets, vacant plots, or green areas, or on any spaces for public use may take place, such as levelling street, building pavements and footpaths, cleaning and planting trees on vacant plots, or in spaces allocated for the development of parks or playgrounds. This stage represents the threshold of becoming aware of the significance of the outdoor space of the neighbourhood environment. In colonias populares, the lack of physical public space for the development of

a public life (circulation, entertainment, and social exchange) requires individuals to carry out actions and interventions of improvement, however most are temporal, limited, and with a very short influence. As was seen in Chapter two, the behavioural theories of territoriality, appropriation, and environmental perception are considered to be very important at this stage.

5.2.2 Collectivizing Perceptions

Due to the problems, threats and initial interventions of some residents on the public space, more individuals usually become involved which builds up a greater collective force. This in turn takes those individual interventions beyond the very immediate public environment outside the dwelling to the wider context of the street, the green spaces, the vacant plots allocated for public spaces, and even the whole colonia. At this stage the collective organization takes place within the development process. The development of alliances and partnerships with different agents within and outside the colonias takes place in search of the permanence of the public space. This collectivizing attitude about public spaces usually takes place about public spaces when basic urban and private (shelter) needs have been if not entirely fulfilled, at least partially satisfied.

5.2.3 Obtaining development

The achievement of a positive community organization can give place to a transitional stage moving from a temporal to a permanent development in which long-lasting solutions can be reached through physical interventions developed by colonias' residents with permanent materials. As the definitive permanent development of public space in the strict sense cannot be carried out by the community itself, at this stage the residents are also involved in a public space project and carry out the necessary steps to finally reach the permanent development of the space. This happens in conjunction with the public authority, by bringing the development application before the municipality. As was seen in Chapter two, the ideas of the social production of the space are relevant in this section.

5.2.4 Reaching permanence

The development initiated by colonias residents takes on a new character when the municipality intervenes in the process. At this stage, residents' physical interventions are continued by the local authority and its contractors and reach the full consolidation of the public space. Residents may, however continue to be fully involved in the management of the development process; they may, for example carry on physical interventions which

complement the authority's interventions, depending on the agreements reached with the local authority. At this stage, negotiations between the local authority and colonias' residents take place about the costs, form and design, construction and all the aspects implicated in the development. The organization of the community, the positive relations between the actors, and the consensus and agreements reached in this interaction leads to the permanence of the public space.

These stages may occur haphazardly, there can be discontinuities and breaks within and between the different actions and relations. The development process is shaped by the behaviours, relations and social interaction of each of the actors involved. Although there are common aspects in the development process of public spaces, variations could take place. On one hand, the development of public spaces in the colonia can take place following the mentioned stages. On the other hand, there may be cases where public space is developed with limited collective action, or without the municipality participation. Development can also be carried out only by the local authority without the participation of colonias residents, although this rarely happens. In all cases, someone has to identify needs (1 in figure 5.1), and this has to collectivise concerns within and/or outside the colonias (2 in figure 5.1) to carry out transformation and promote development (3 in figure 5.1). The participation of the municipality is essential for the permanent consolidation of public spaces (4 in figure 5.1). In the following sections of this chapter, drawing on the urban dynamics of the different public spaces of the colonias introduced in the previous chapter, the different stages of the development process will be thoroughly described and scrutinized.

5.3 Threatening Permanence: Constraints over communal spaces

5.3.1 Invading and privatizing the public

Spaces allocated for public use in most of the colonias of Xalapa are commonly threatened and constrained along the urban consolidation process of colonias populares. As we mentioned in Chapter two, colonias populares can be created through the invasion of land. In the development of the popular habitat there is a high demand for land for housing. The land available is commonly an object of dispute; a great amount of city dwellers go through the invasion, competition, and illegal appropriation processes in order to fulfil their private needs for shelter. This situation has brought about the situation that in colonias populares the space

allocated for public uses is also continuously invaded by different agents (e.g. residents, or local government) who threaten the permanence and existence of the space allocated for the collectivity.

The lack of land tenure, which characterizes the beginning of colonias formation, is an important aspect that promotes the invasion of public spaces. In the case of private properties, colonias residents promote land regularization, however the land meant to be for public use is generally neglected. Although, the municipality may stand as owner, the spaces are commonly left without property title, and without a document granting them the quality of public. This makes the public spaces vulnerable to invasion and eventually privatization. The high demand of land for housing is not the only threat to their permanence; the daily private activities carried out by colonias' residents who invade and constrain the existence of the space are also a continuous threat. This section illustrates how the different spaces allocated for public use go through an environment of danger, risk, and invasion, which constrains the future existence of the public space.

5.3.2 Actors Invading

The invasion of the land allocated for public space can be promoted by both internal and external agents. Internal agents are those belonging to the community, residents of the colonia living around these spaces as well as community leaders and activists. External agents promoting invasion or privatization can be popular groups, political parties, as well as governmental authorities (Figure 5.2).

At the initial stages of urban consolidation of the colonias, spaces are commonly left undeveloped and empty; they therefore appear not to belong to anybody and are regarded by many as a location for the development of a private space. The existence and permanence of these spaces depends on the demand on the land for private uses. Even if the land for public use of the colonias was allocated from the beginning of the neighbourhood planning and formation, the permanence or disappearance of these will depend on different agents who also have own objectives for, and interests in those spaces.

EN DIRECTO
Desde el Fraccionamiento Arboledas de Xalapa

Ayuntamiento intenta reubicar familias en área verde

Inadecuado trazo urbano y perros en condominios son algunos de los problemas que aquejan a los vecinos del circuito Palmeras, del Fraccionamiento Arboledas de Xalapa.

Vía telefónica, Florencio Nera se quejó porque el Ayuntamiento reubicó a tres familias en el área verde del fraccionamiento, sin embargo, los vecinos no permitieron que terminaran de instalarse.

Los niños siguen jugando en las calles porque dicho lugar está cercado por las autoridades municipales y amenazan con reubicar a otras familias.

Otro de los problemas es que una persona alberga



AREA verde donde el Ayuntamiento planea reubicar a más familias.

perros callejeros, lo que ción en las áreas de tránsito provoca un foco de infección común.

DIRECT
From Arboledas de Xalapa Colonia
The municipality intends to relocate families in green area.

Inadequate urban design and dogs in this colonia are some of the problems suffered by the residents of Palmeras Street in the 'Fraccionamiento Arboledas'.

Florencio Nara denounced that the Municipality relocated three families in the green area of his colonia. However, residents did not allow the families to settle in the area.

Children play on the streets because the local authorities have fenced the space saying that they will relocate some other families.

Figure 5.2 Local authorities invading space. In this case the local authorities are invading, granting the public space for housing, regardless the residents position, however residents aware of this, have fought back and protected their public space. Source: Diario de Xalapa (newspaper). 16 August 2002

Popular groups, in alliance with political parties and sometimes also supported by authorities at different governmental levels, have invaded land allocated for public spaces in different colonias populares. In colonia Revolucion, most invaders were organized in groups by leaders who were supported by political parties and politicians. This gave rise to clientalist practices¹, and in this way politicians gained votes in elections by encouraging people with the need for housing to invade the space available in the new colonias and helping them to get property titles. As was seen in Chapter two, the arguments of the development process in Latin America of Pirez (1995) are relevant in the case of Colonia Revolucion. In this colonia, there was even competition between the different political parties and groups to appropriate the spaces. This resulted in conflict, fighting and confrontation between people living already there and newcomers, all of whom were trying to appropriate the public spaces.

Colonia leaders can be the ones promoting the disappearance of the spaces which are meant to be for collective use. This is done by encouraging their occupation, and selling them to new

¹ Land invasion and promising urban development in exchange of votes is an activity promoted by politicians. In addition urban transformations and improvements are carried out in low-income neighbourhoods during the period of political campaigns to gain votes from the community. Urban improvement may take place with the help of politicians in those areas with more followers. Those areas where there are not sympathizers are neglected. Residents in colonia Revolucion argue that the influence of the Mexican political system in the colonias populares is an important factor of community fragmentation and underdevelopment

comers. This is a common practice in many colonias, for example it happened in colonia Los Pinos, where the colonia's leader as the one in charge of managing the creation of the colonia, sold the communal space. At the beginning, an area of 1017 sq. meters had been left in colonia Los Pinos. Little by little the area was reduced to a third through the allocation of four more plots of an average of 160 square meters. Fortunately the colonia still has the remaining space for public use. It is now however, about 300 square meters. In this colonia the plots were sold not only to new comers but also to residents already living in the colonia who desired another property, another dwelling or simply desired to extend their existing one.

Another agent promoting the privatization of the public are the municipal authorities² who, according to their different interests in the development of the city, are another agent promoting the occupation of the few spaces allocated for public use in colonias populares, through granting the land to individuals. In some cases the land is granted to squatters who have settled in dangerous and risky areas of the city, and therefore are relocated in the free spaces available in the city. This happens especially in the areas allocated for collective uses in the colonias populares, as it happened in colonia Revolucion where some residents were living in some other peripheral neighbourhoods and were relocated into some of the spaces meant to be for the collective use. Another way to occupy these spaces is by granting them to particular individuals whose properties have been expropriated or affected by the urban development carried out by the municipality in other parts of the city. Drawing again on the case of Colonia Los Pinos, this situation is seen in the communal space, which after being reduced to a third, it was granted by the local authorities to a particular person in exchange for an expropriated property that the municipality needed for another public works. The local authority usually takes this kind of decision without the knowledge of those who maintain and contribute to the social and physical development of these spaces. In this way, these municipal decisions can be regarded as abuse of power, and result in the neglect of neighbourhoods, communities and people. (Figure 5.2)

In addition to popular groups, political parties and local authorities, residents of the colonias have also carried out or promoted the invasion in order to acquire a plot for another member of the family. In this way, residents living around the spaces allocated for public use, envisage

² Interestingly, also in constrained urban environments of the 'developed world' where the availability of housing is scarce communal lots are also threatened by local authorities to allocate new buildings and conflict arises between those concerned with public space and those promoting privatization as happened in the struggle of community gardens in New York. See (Stacheli et al, 1997, 2002)

the space as the place for a dwelling and develop their own strategies to appropriate the space and finally gain ownership. To illustrate this, a case of colonia Revolucion will be drawn on. Residents living around the area located in Felipe IV Street supported the invasion of the free open space located in their street which was meant to be for a little park and playground, or green space. The invasion was carried out by neighbours already living in the street who did not own any property in the colonia; however they were living with their relatives. They did not face opposition; on the contrary they were encouraged by the neighbours of the street. Elena, who arrived at Felipe IV Street with her daughter to live with her brother, lived here for 16 years until she was able to get plot in the invasion of the free space of the street. She was encouraged to invade the space by her brother and some neighbours who knew that the space was not owned by anybody, and that it was a public space for the community and that sooner or later it will be taken by some other people, popular groups or the municipality. Therefore, residents of the street deemed it preferable that the space was occupied by people already living in the colonia for many years, without a property of their own, rather than being occupied by people that they did not know. Most of the neighbours assumed that the ones already living in the colonia had more rights to the land than newcomers. As a result the land was suddenly invaded by Elena, her daughter and another six families, who subdivided the land into eight plots of an average of 112 square meters. In one day they built their dwellings with the help and support of the rest of the neighbours, who helped them to set up the dwellings, shared water and electricity and allowed them to make a living in the communal space located in that street. The same situation happened in Leon de la Barrera Street where part of the land was also invaded by some relatives of the residents living in the street. Luchita had come to the colonia since its foundation, and she knew which areas were meant to be for public facilities and green spaces. She realized that some of them were being invaded and also allocated by the municipality for newcomers. So she knew that if she invaded the land nobody would criticise her because it was not owned by anybody. So she encouraged her cousin to come and live in the colonia and take the opportunity of getting a plot for her house. Her cousin came to live to the colonia and built her house in the space, without encountering any problems.

Another very common form of invasion, is one related to the different private activities that many residents living next to the public space carry out. In this case of invasion, residents whose house, faces the land allocated for public development, make use of the space to fulfil

their private needs, not up to the point of invading the land with a dwelling and completely privatizing the space, but with the development of activities that somehow constrain the permanence of the space as public. Therefore the space is invaded by residents who use it as parking areas, as well as spaces for working activities such as garages and workshops (e.g. used by mechanics, blacksmiths, and upholsterers). (Figure 5.3)



Figure 5.3 Invading public space. The public space is invaded by the residents living around it, occupying it according to their private needs. A tyre workshop, a garage, a shoe workshop, a blacksmith workshop, are the private activities taking place in the public area of Division del Norte Street of Colonia Revolucion.

The invasion of communal spaces can be also carried out by anti-social behaviour, as in many colonias the undeveloped spaces are places for crime, littering, and drugs and alcohol consumption. Residents, who are concerned about the healthy environment of the colonia, promote the development of streets and vacant spaces allocated for public use in order to avoid the continuous threat of the appropriation of these spaces by undesirable and antisocial behaviour, environmental deterioration, and insecurity. As was seen in Chapter two, the idea of environmental perception (Rapoport 1997) is considered to be very important. In the colonias of Xalapa, residents have both perceived problems and possible solutions for the improvement and development of public spaces.

The public permanence of these spaces always depends on the colonia residents, and mainly on the residents living around the spaces. It will depend on their knowledge, interests, and concerns about the spaces. As we saw there are residents who encourage and promote the occupation of the land, on the other hand, there are also residents who encourage and promote the protection of the spaces. Colonia residents who view these spaces as communal space and as spaces planned and allocated for the collectivity, struggle for the continuous existence of the public space.

5.3.3 Confronting the private, defending the public

Along with the threats and reality of invasion, confrontation, resistance and defence for the public space all take place in *colonias populares*. In many cases those invading the space face resistance from the community. And this is the case of many *colonias* of Xalapa. Many spaces which have been allocated for public use have been lost due to the invasions and illegal appropriation, however in other cases the invaders did not succeed. Those residents knowing, and acknowledging the significance of the spaces for collective uses, resist the different kinds of invasions, and defended the spaces through different actions and strategies. In Chapter two, the theory of space appropriation was discussed. This is seen in the *colonias* of Xalapa. Residents of the *colonias* 'appropriate the space' as defined by Brower (1980): as the act of exercising the control of a particular environment through its defence. Residents have exercised control of the spaces allocated for public uses through their defence.

In the context of invasion and defence the interaction between those who wish to keep the land for public use and those who want it for private uses becomes a very difficult one. The public spaces of the *colonias* therefore become a battleground on which the different interests and actions compete for the space, carrying out a struggle which takes place in the public space, for the continued public nature, and for its permanence. The public sets itself up against the private and vice versa, in this struggle those involved make use of their power, resources and capabilities, interacting and trying to dominate, subordinate and resist respectively. This was discussed in the theoretical framework of the thesis, where it was seen that in the *colonias*, the actors make use of their *rules and resources* (Giddens 1984) for the permanence or disappearance of public space.

The main fear of *colonias* residents is the rapid occupation of the land by squatters, who overnight build huts and invade the space. Therefore one of the first signs of defence is carried out individually by those residents living around these spaces. They have seen the loss of the public space in other *colonias*; and therefore watch the spaces on daily basis in order to prevent the actions of those intending to occupy them. There have been attempts to build different sorts of buildings, such as in the communal space located in Pedro de Alvarado Street in Colonia Revolucion which was watched by the residents living around. One day early in the morning residents living around the space realized that there were construction workers in the space with construction materials and they were about to start the construction

of a church. The invaders were an evangelist group claiming that they held permission from the municipality (they did not) to build their church³, however the residents did not allow it and stopped them.

When an invasion has taken place, and invaders have managed to set up their huts for housing, the quality of life for nearby residents is affected. The social environment of the colonia is negatively affected by invasions. Residents try to prevent the invaders from becoming established. For example there may be daily verbal confrontations, in which residents express their annoyance and try to convince the invaders to leave the spaces. They may also prevent the invaders getting connected to the electricity or water systems of the colonia. The public space, even if it is unimproved and undeveloped, may be the place of social activities and interaction. For example the space located in Felipe IV Street was invaded by some residents, however before the invasion, the space was the place for colonia celebrations, parties and dance which was not possible after the invasion.

Individual actions are not enough to confront invasions. The defence of the space has to be carried out collectively by many members of the colonia. Residents of the colonias organize themselves; establish networks within, and even outside the colonia to consolidate the organization to carry out collective resistance. This happened in the colonias we are studying. To illustrate this, the experiences of the residents of Colonia Revolucion and Colonia Los Pinos, who have carried out the protection of their public space through several actions of defence, will be drawn on.

The creation of 'community boards' it is also another tool that residents of colonias populares make use of in order to defend their communal space. In colonia Revolucion, the residents acknowledged the importance of the communal spaces and recognized the significance of the spaces to the future colonia development. Yet also saw the continuous threat to them. Therefore a group of residents living nearby these public spaces organized themselves for four years in a committee of around twenty residents from all over the colonia to defend the existing communal spaces. They created "the council of defence of the green areas and streets of Colonia Revolucion" (El consejo y defensa de areas verdes y vialidades de la Colonia Revolucion). (Figure 5.4)

³Nino Murcia (1997) points out about the invasion of public spaces, namely of the few green areas in the *barrios populares* of Colombia, although for the construction of enclosed urban facilities leaving the barrios without public open spaces, defence took place as well.

Andrés Uribe, Grupo ACIR Xalapa - 19 de julio de 1996.

EN LA CIUDAD DE XALAPA-ENRIQUEZ, VERACRUZ., -

SIENDO LAS DIECIOCHO HORAS DEL DIA QUINCE DE JULIO DE MIL NOVE- -

CIENTOS NOVENTA Y SEIS, LOS VECINOS DE LA COLONIA REVOLUCION DE -

ESTA CIUDAD, REUNIDOS EN LA AVENIDA ATENAS VERACRUZANA ESQUINA --

CON CALLE CRISTOBAL DE OLID, PARA ANALIZAR LA PROBLEMÁTICA DE ES- -

TA COLONIA LA QUE SE REALIZO BAJO LOS SIGUIENTES PUNTOS:

PRIMERO.- PREOCUPADOS POR LA SITUACIÓN QUE SE HA VENIDO PRESEN --

TANDO, EN CUANTO A INVASIÓN DE AREAS VERDES, AREAS DE --

EQUIPAMIENTO Y VIALIDADES, EN PARTICULAR PERSONAS AJENAS

LA COLONIA, NOS VEMOS EN LA NECESIDAD DE ORGANIZARNOS

COMO VECINOS.

SEGUNDO.- EN USO DE LA VOZ CADA UNO DE LOS VECINOS EXPLICA LOS MO- -

TIVOS QUE SE TIENEN PARA CUIDAR LAS AREAS QUE NO DEBEN- -

SER USADAS PARA VIVIENDAS.

TERCERO.- EN VIRTUD DE QUE ESTA COLONIA REVOLUCION HA SIDO OBJETO- -

DE INVASION CONSTANTE Y SISTEMÁTICA EN SUS AREAS VERDES -

Y DE EQUIPAMIENTO, E INCLUSO DE LAS VIALIDADES, ACORDA- -

MOS UNANIMEMENTE EN UN FRENTE PRO-DEFENSA DE AREAS VER- -

DES Y VIALIDADES DE LA COLONIA REVOLUCION.

CUARTO.- LOS VECINOS ACORDAMOS QUE ESTE FRENTE SE CONFORME DE 13- -

JUL. CONSEJEROS, QUE DEBERAN SER ELEGIDOS ENTRE LOS VECINOS -

QUE HAYAN DEMOSTRADO MAYOR INTERES POR EL CUIDADO DE --

XALAPA-BANDERILLA TLALNEHUAYOCANT AREAS.

QUINTO.- SOMETIDO A VOTACION, NUESTRO FRENTE PRO-DEFENSA DE AREAS

VERDES Y VIALIDADES HA QUEDADO CONSTITUIDO POR LOS SI- -

GUENTES VECINOS QUIENES FIRMAN LA PRESENTE COMO CONSTAN- -

CIA DE ACEPTACION DE CARGO.

Por David de Xalapa
Reportero: Santos Solís Ríos
18 Jul 96
de Xalapa

Gracia CODE
XALAPA
18-07-96
8:05 P.M.
de Xalapa

RECEIVED
JUL 18 1996
ESTADO DE VERACRUZ
SECRETARIA DE FAMILIA
XALAPA VER.

RECEIVED
JUL 19 1996
SECRETARIA DE FAMILIA
XALAPA VER.

City of Xalapa-Enriquez, Veracruz, at 6pm on the 15th July, 1996. The residents of Colonia Revolution gathered on the corner of Atenas Veracruzana Street and Cristobal de Olid Street to analyse the problems of the colonia. This meeting was held under the following aspects:

First: We are worried about the invasions of the green areas, areas for urban facilities and thoroughfares carried out by people from outside the colonia; therefore we need to get organized.

Second: Every resident has expressed his/her reasons to take care of the open spaces which must not be used for houses.

Third: Due to the fact that Colonia Revolution has been the target of continuous and systematic invasions in its areas designated for green areas and urban facilities, and even thoroughfares, we unanimously agreed to form a front in defence of green areas and streets of Colonia Revolution.

Fourth: We all agreed that this front will be made of thirteen counsellors, who will be elected by those residents showing the greatest interest for the green areas.

Fifth: The elected counsellors have accepted their position in this organization and their signatures appear in this document.

Sixth: The activities of this front in defence of green areas and streets, will exclusively focus to defend the spaces which are legally considered for urban facilities and to manage the eviction of those spaces already invaded with the cooperation of all neighbours who have unconditionally supported the objectives of the organization.

Figure 5.4 The council of the Defence: This is the document demonstrating how the residents started to get organized to form the "Council of Defence of Green Areas and Streets of Colonia Revolution" as an answer of the continuous invasions of the spaces allocated for collective use. (Document provided by Señor Juan Hernandez Welsh)

Through this group, the residents of the colonia worked together in the different spaces. They faced different kind of invasions; however the most difficult ones were when the spaces were invaded by squatters. Therefore the council negotiated and explained to the invaders that these areas were designated for communal use, and that although they were empty they would be developed with parks, gardens and different communal services, for the colonia's residents own benefit, and therefore houses or private activities were not allowed.

The council of defence of the green areas and streets was legally registered as a committee before the authorities in 1996, although the residents as a group had carried out their activities in the colonia for around 1 year before this. They managed to protect and recovered five communal spaces out of the ten allocated initially. These spaces are: 1) one on Pedro de Alvarado Street, 2) one on Isabela Catolica Street (Jovita Park), and 3) one on Cristobal the Olid Street (Solidaridad Park), 4) one on Romulo de la Vega Street, 5) and another on Paseo de Xalapa Street (a playground and court).

The council was very effective, they succeeded in defending the remaining spaces as well as promoting different actions of development. They held regular meetings, every week at the beginning when the spaces were constantly threatened, and later on once or twice a month. The meetings were carried out to define strategies for protecting, defending and transforming the spaces. Through the council of defence, the concern about the existence of public spaces became spread to the rest of the colonia, integrating a significant number of active neighbours, not only people living around the communal spaces and green areas but also people living in neighbouring streets. They set up goals, objectives and strategies, and made use of the members' knowledge and resources to carry out direct actions of defence. This included learning how to approach people who were trying to illegally occupy the spaces, learning which authorities should be approached to support them, and learning how to encourage the protection of the spaces among the rest of the community. All the member of the group had ID card to promote respect and so as to be able to defend any space at any time if necessary. A similar case took place in Colonia Los Pinos where the defence of the public space was also performed by the residents organized in a committee in defence of the communal space with objectives, and strategies of defence.

Confrontation can take place through different ways depending on the resources available to for the colonias' residents, and the defence may be carried out beyond the environment of the colonia as well. An example of this was to make use of the media (mainly with articles and letters in local newspapers), in which colonia's inhabitants denounce what is happening in their public space. The inhabitants of colonia Los Pinos have expressed themselves in *Diario de Xalapa* to defend their space when they realized that their public space was granted to a particular person by the local authorities (Figure 5.5).

Colonos xalapeños abril 2001 pelean por área verde

GONZALO VIDAL VARAS

Un grupo de vecinos de la calle prolongación Esteban Mascariño, sección Los Pinos, de la colonia Mártires de Chicago, realizó una manifestación en contra de Rigoberto Villasis Lara, quien asegura ser el propietario de un terreno ubicado en esa sección y que, según los planos mostrados a este re-

portero, figura como área verde. Arturo Hinojosa, vocero del grupo de vecinos, dijo que el terreno que Rigoberto Villasis señala como de su propiedad, era considerado como zona de área verde, destinada a beneficio de los vecinos. Aseguró que ya han iniciado plati-

cas con las autoridades, "pero hasta ahora no hay nada claro". Señaló que defenderán los espacios de los niños y que no permitirán se les "arrebate el poco terreno que tienen para jugar y divertirse sanamente". Según los inconformes, desde hace más de 10 años los vecinos decidieron que ese terreno sería dedicado exclusivamente para área verde, por lo que "no entendemos que el municipio, por resarcir a un ciudadano en sus legítimos derechos, perjudique a más de cien vecinos de una zona donde hay una enorme cantidad de niños que disfrutan ese espacio".

Reclaman que, Rigoberto Villasis, quien dice que tiene los terrenos desde hace tres años, "nunca, en todo ese tiempo, se apareció a colaborar con las faenas de los vecinos y menos aportó para el sistema de drenaje que fue financiado con dinero de los vecinos, pero ahora, cuando ya se han realizado las obras de mejoramiento y cuando el terreno fue limpiado y recuperado para los niños, entonces se aparece a decir este terreno es mío".

Aclaran que la denuncia es en contra de las autoridades, pues "no es posible que por beneficiar a un particular, ocupen áreas naturales que son para el disfrute de todos los vecinos".

Por su parte, Villasis Lara indicó que ese terreno y otros dos se los dio el Ayuntamiento durante el periodo de Rafael Hernández Villalpando como testimonio de una atecación de hace 15 años, desde que Manuel Fernández fuera presidente municipal de Xalapa.

Dijo que después de 14 años de estar peleando para que le restituyeran el terreno que "me habían quitado, finalmente el licenciado Villalpando dio instrucciones para que resolvieran con justicia lo que me había quitado el municipio".

Afirmó que le quitaron mil 400 metros cuadrados de terreno y ese es uno de los tres que le dieron como compensación, "ya que el municipio no tiene propiedades tan grandes, me dieron cuatro que ni siquiera suman lo que se me quitó".

**Colonos (residents) of Xalapa
Fighting for Green Area**

A group of residents of Mascarenas Street of Colonia Los Pinos (Mártires de Chicago) demonstrated against Rigoberto Villasis Lara, who claims to be the owner of a plot located in this area. According to the plans shown to this journalist, the area seems to be a green area.

Arturo Hinojosa, spokesman of the group of residents, said that the land that Rigoberto Villasis claims as his, was considered a green area for the benefit of the residents. He affirms that they have already talked to the authorities, but so far there is nothing clear. He pointed out that they will defend the space for their children. And they will not allow that the little land they have to play in and enjoy be snatched away from them.

According to the affected residents, 10 years ago they decided that area would be exclusively allocated for green area. "We do not understand the fact that the local authorities with the intention of compensating an individual harm more than 100 residents within an area. There is an enormous number of children who enjoy that space".



COLONOS que defienden lo que consideran es una área de esparcimiento.



NIÑOS juegan en la colonia Los Pinos mientras los adultos discuten por la

Figure 5.5 The residents of colonia Los Pinos defending their communal space 'area verde' (green area) denouncing their problem in the local newspaper. (Source: *Diario de Xalapa*, April 2001. Article provided by the residents.)

The process of invasion and defence brings about an atmosphere of conflict between the different agents who are competing for the space. Conflicting situations may affect the daily public space of the colonia. Residents endure face to face confrontations with invaders disturbing the colonia's daily life, not only altering the social environment of the colonia but also threatening the integrity of the members of the community. The environment of the colonia can become a volatile one, when intimidation and clashes take place during the dispute of the space, and the security of women and children may be threatened. This was the case of colonia Los Pinos, where an invader tried to start building a house in the communal space but without success due to the defence carried out by the residents. Later on the newcomer verbally harassed some women and children in the colonia and even took pictures of them. The residents of the colonia were very scared about this fact.

5.4.3 Developing public space through community initiatives

Within the colonia there are different point of views and ways of thinking, and that is why in the colonias the spaces can be invaded by the members of the same community. This may not be viewed well by other members of the community who wish to keep the space public. Therefore confrontation and defence is carried out by those wishing to maintain the publicness of the space, which gives rise to an environment of conflict between neighbours. These are complicated situations, and those against the invasion try to avoid confrontation with their neighbours who are invading the space as it turns their social relations into very difficult ones. Therefore neighbours may show tolerance, however at certain points defence will be carried out. This happened in some spaces in colonia Revolucion, as well as in the space of colonia Constituyentes. In colonia Revolucion, in the space allocated for a little park on Pedro de Alvarado Street, one of the neighbours living in front of the space used to make a living with a garage, and the entire public space was used as a parking and working area to



Figure 5.6 Residents of Pedro de Alvarado street defending their public space. They are struggling against the mechanic who had appropriated the space with cars and trucks (Source: Señora Jovita Rodriguez).

repair all the cars and trucks. The space was dirty, polluted and had rats living in it. In this case residents talked several times to their neighbour and politely asked him to clear the space, however the space was never cleared out. Eventually the residents expressed their annoyance to this resident and his activities in the space. Finally those against the invasion

pushed the cars out of the space, hired a crane to move the big trucks, and confronted the mechanic.. Residents really felt that their quality of life was affected by the private activities developed in their communal spaces (Figure 5.6). The same situation took place in colonia Constituyentes; however in this case the mechanic invading the space finally took the cars out by himself, so residents did not face confrontation. These examples clearly illustrate the different theories and concepts of appropriation and defence discussed in Chapter two. Residents of the colonias see environmental problems and begin to do something about them. In this way, the public spaces of the colonias also become spaces of contestation where actors making use of their power, rules and resources, struggle for the public space.

5.4 Organization towards development

5.4.1 Developing public space through community initiatives

For the production process to take place the organization of the community has to be built up. Residents' self-organization is very important if they want to maintain their communal spaces. However, motivating the residents to get together for the sake of the public space is not an easy task. The previous section described how the residents of colonia Revolucion defended their spaces through the council of defence. This raises the questions of how colonias residents achieve collective organization for the development of public spaces? And what are the challenges in reaching organization? In this process, the colonias' residents interacted with internal and external agents to achieve unity and consensus within a public environment of challenges, conflicts among neighbours, disappointments, and opposing objectives and points of views. The community have to get organized to carry out defence, development applications to the municipality, physical development, and finally the permanence of the space which involves management and maintenance. Most colonias residents argue that this is such a difficult task.

5.4.2 Agents of changes

The organization of people around public spaces is commonly accomplished by a small group of neighbours⁴ (generally three to five). However the small core group are able to mobilise large numbers on some occasions as seen in the example of the council of defence in Colonia Revolucion. Agents of change are individuals who are conscious of the problems of the

⁴ Hordick (2000) in her research in the popular settlements of Lima found similar situations in the development of parks. She argues that little is done collectively involving the neighbourhood as a whole. Parks are created by private initiatives or by small groups of residents. This contrast with other initiatives (such as infrastructure drainage, water, etc) of improvement and consolidation in which organization and participation at neighbourhood level is stronger, especially at early stages of consolidation.

colonia, about the collective life, and the issues related to their quality of life. These residents are promoters of development, transformation, and change, and in the case of defending a public space they promote its defence. The 'agents' take the responsibility of encouraging and motivating the community about the importance of their public space and its collective significance, and consequently the meaning of a collective organization for development. Agents of change are characterized by their knowledge about the colonia's problems, and more importantly they know that they have the capacity to intervene, change and improve their immediate environment. As discussed in Chapter two the idea of empowerment in popular habitats is considered to be important. Residents are empowered with the understanding that their contribution to the well being of the colonia is imperative in a context of a lack of resources and the incapacity of the local authorities to satisfy the colonia's needs. Residents promoting transformation and improvement have a human and social vocation, which make them attracted to the collective life, keeping in mind the idea of coming together for one common goal in order to improve the public environment of their colonia. As one resident said: *"I am from this community and I have to contribute for its well being, not only to live in it"*⁵. Some may have already been involved in other improvement activities within their colonia or even in another area. This will have helped them to learn how to deal with neighbourhood relations, how to motivate agreements, and overcome disagreements and constraints and how to make organizations succeed. This is also recognized by other colonia's residents and their intervention in the urban consolidation may go beyond the boundaries of only one street, communal space or a colonia. People like this are recognized as good agents of change and development and residents from other places look for them to help to organize colonias' people towards development. In the colonias studied, it was found that the main promoters of public spaces development such as the promoters of the paving of Zumarraga Street of Colonia Revolucion, the promoter of the paving of Orozco street, or the promoters of the council of defence of public spaces, were often invited to assist and organize the residents towards the development of some other streets and parks within and outside the colonia.

The 'agents of development and change', are those who promote transformation, and overcome all difficulties presented on the way towards organisation. They carry out the task of attracting people's interest in positive interventions in the immediate environment. They

⁵ This is the main promoter of Villahermosa Park in Colonia Ferrocarrilera.

also recognize the problems; and take advantage of the opportunities for development. To do this they motivate the community and recognize its strengths and capabilities as tools towards a successful organization and therefore achieve development. All these are endeavours that at least one colonia resident undertakes within his/her community in order to carry out development.

5.4.3 Women and development

Across Latin America the importance of women in the urban consolidation of popular settlements has been recognized. For example in Chile Segovia (2000) affirms that *"women are the ones who make their environment a more pleasant place to live: they participate more in both functional and territorial organizations, they interact more with neighbours..."*, Massolo (2002) in her studies of gender and popular settlements in Mexico tell us:

"Overall, the local environment, associated with the daily life of the family and household chores, is the most accessible public world with which women are the most familiarized: the barrio, the neighbourhood community and the locality represent the places where women have developed and expressed their roles, interest, abilities and struggles".

Furthermore, Hordick (2000) in her studies in low-income neighbourhoods in Lima (Peru) found out that parks are a collective effort mostly undertaken by women. In the colonias populares of Xalapa, women are significantly involved in the organization for the defence, development and permanence of the public environment. It is important to mention that in the interviews carried out with those involved in the development of the public space in the colonias, the interviewees were more women than men. Women are commonly the most involved at all stages of public space development in colonias populares; they are activators, they thoroughly know their local environment, and they are the ones assuming greatest responsibility and the leading role in neighbourhood development. In Villahermosa Park in Colonia Ferrocarrilera the residents who started the idea of a park in the communal space of their colonia and later on began the organization were a group of 4 women. In Mascarenas Park of Colonia Los Pinos, women are the ones who have been most involved in the defence and physical transformations of the space. In colonia Revolucion, the development of Jovita Park, Solidaridad Park, and Jose Maria Iglesias Park were all mainly promoted by women. In Colonia Tres de Mayo, in the development of Colonias Unidas Park, women were the most involved in the organization as well. Furthermore, in many streets of colonia Revolucion, those promoting development, trying to organize the community and carrying out applications

and negotiation with the municipality are women. This suggests that women participate more than men in the production process of the public space of colonias populares. In addition, women are often the key actors in the material development of a neighbourhood's public spaces. The construction and design are influenced by the women's knowledge about the local environment and their interests in providing a more familiar, healthy, multi-functional space which fulfils the needs of all and leads to a more successful and inclusive public space.

5.4.4 Children's participation

Children are the first to appropriate their immediate public space within the residential environment through their daily domestic and play activities. This is especially true in low-income neighbourhoods where the private environment of the dwelling extends to the public space. However, children also play a very significant role in the urban consolidation processes as they are intimately familiar with the local environment of the neighbourhood and they are the most knowledgeable about the neighbourhood environs. This is an aspect that professionals, politicians, and policy makers have failed to recognize (Chawla 2002). Driskell (2002:12) affirms that children should be active and valued partners in efforts towards positive community change.

In the popular habitat of Latin America the participation of women has been acknowledged, however the participation of children in the neighbourhood consolidation process has been overlooked. In the colonias populares of Xalapa it has been seen that children can play a very significant role in the consolidation of the colonia environment. They may not be involved in the formal organization for the development of the space (e.g. in community boards), however it is evident that their actions in the consolidation of the public spaces are an important contribution to the progress of the collective environment in the colonias. Children may be involved in the protection of a public space, as it occurred in colonia Los Pinos where children have had active role in the defence of their communal space. They were aware of the conflict that the colonia's communal space had gone through so they have been engaged in the different expressions of resistance. When colonia Los Pinos went to demonstrate in the main plaza of Xalapa, the demonstration was carried out mainly by the children of the colonia. Children spend long periods within the neighbourhood environment and in popular settlements they play in the public spaces. This has also helped to the protection of the public space. In Los Pinos, children have become 'guardians of the space' as they called themselves. They have protected the space from any suspicious behaviour suggestive of invasions, and if

they see something or somebody strange in their public space, they immediately inform the adults (as happened when the researcher first visited the colonia). Colonia Los Pinos' children are truly guardians of their neighbourhood park. In this ways adults and children could form a stronger organization in order to effectively achieve the community goals of protecting their public space.

In Jovita Park of Colonia Revolucion, children played a very important role in the physical development of the space. When the main promoter of this space, a woman called Jovita, encouraged the development of the communal space in front of her house; the most enthusiastic residents were the children of the colonia. Jovita also used to work in a nursery school in the colonia, and she knew a lot of children, consequently some of them used to go to the nursery in the morning and then in the afternoon Jovita used to take them to work in the development of the Jovita Park. They were actually the ones who started the construction of the play ground of the park with the help of their parents. Whenever Jovita called the residents to carried improvements to the space, the children usually came with their tools, some with brooms, and others with shovels. Similar activities took place in Mascarenas Park of Los Pinos, where the children not only participated in the defence of the space; they were also very engaged in the physical development activities on the space. They helped with the construction of the playground, planting trees and by the time the research was carried out they met every Saturday to do 'talacha' (to work on the space). This involved cleaning the park, cutting the grass, and taking care of the gardens. The construction of public spaces will be explored in depth in the following chapter. In both Mascarenas Park of Colonia Los Pinos and Jovita Parks of Revolution, children were key actors helping and encouraging the rest of the community to participate in the development of their public space. Veronica and Tony who have been involved in the development of Mascarenas Park in Colonia Los Pinos say:

"Women and children are the most involved in all the work we have carried out in our space, men are always the least for participating, it is being always like that, this has been a work of women and children".

5.4.5 Social Networks

The achievement of collective organization depends highly on the existing social relations between the residents. Strong social links are essential for an environment of unity and cohesiveness within the colonia. When an invasion of a space takes place in the colonias at

the very beginning of their formation, preventive measures are not likely to occur. This has been seen to happen in colonia Los Pinos and in colonia Revolucion where at the beginning of development the collective space was invaded, sold, or reduced without any opposition from the colonias' people. At that time, residents claimed that the community was not yet consolidated, neighbours did not know each other, there were weak social networks and they were not attached to the colonia environment. As was seen in Chapter two, the arguments about environmental perception put forth by Rapoport (1977:28) are very relevant. He argues: *"The perception people build about their environment can be affected by the meanings attached to it, by the people and groups occupying a place, and certainly by the physical environment and the significance this represents"* (Rapoport 1977:28). The importance of perception can be observed in Los Pinos and Revolucion. In these colonias, the perception of the residents to defend their public spaces was affected by the factors mentioned by Rapoport.

The lack of organization in Colonia Los Pinos and Revolucion was because there were changes in the population due to the continuous migration of the inhabitants; there were people temporally living in the colonia who had no interest in its improvements. Indeed there was no coherence or unity to achieve some sort of organization to work towards the collective space. On the other hand when the residents had lived together in the colonia for longer, owned property, and knew each other, there were closer social relations among them, and organization could take place with less difficulty. This happened in colonia Los Pinos when residents got together to defend their public space. The kind of social relations between the neighbours is a crucial factor towards organization and construction of alliances and partnerships within the colonia. The significance of the social relations within the community is that members know how each member can contribute to the collective organization and how they can have a positive impact on the space.

5.4.6 External networks and Agents

The establishment of social networks and links beyond the immediate public environment is also an aspect which reinforces people's organization, and consequently the development work. A network that goes beyond the limits of a single public space is important. A public sphere that connects the organization to a larger social network with a common goal is important for both organization and development. Making connections outside the colonia brings about the intervention of external agents in the process. This can foster the community organization, encourage people's interests and help to avoid community fragmentation and

indifference towards the immediate outdoor space. In Colonia Los Pinos, the intervention of an architect, friend of one of the residents has strongly supported the organization in the protection and the physical development of their communal space. This architect is one of the main promoters of a park in the colonia he belongs to – Colonias Unidas Park- located in Colonia Tres de Mayo. The main agent of change of the Villahermosa Park of Colonia Ferrocarrilera is a freelance blacksmith who has found economical support for the development of the park with his clients. At the same time he knows some of the residents of Colonia Los Pinos and has helped Los Pinos' residents with the development of the playground of the park. At the same way, Los Pinos' residents are in contact with residents of other colonias in the city who are experiencing the threats of invasion, in order to learn how they have defended their spaces. Moreover, in colonia Revolucion the creation of the council of defence of the public space of the colonia was a joint organization made up of residents living around different communal open spaces located in different areas of this big colonia. The same has happened with the development of streets where the main agents of change find support in external agents like residents from other streets who support the organization by making use of their knowledge. In all these cases the establishment of external networks, through alliances and partnerships with external agents fosters the residents' organization for development. They also reinforce social relations and concerns within the colonia around public spaces. As one resident of the Colonia Los Pinos states '*external help represents for us motivation through examples of solidarity*'.

An exchange of support and encouragement between the 'main agents of change' with external and internal actors is essential for development. If this relationship does not take place, the organization and therefore the development of the public space of colonias populares does not occur. Residents of streets or parks who have not managed to make improvements argue that they have not achieved development of their public space because there is no unity in the community. They also argue that the organization carried out by those concerned has not gone very far, and that those trying to be 'agents of change and development' do not find support and are discouraged and therefore lose the initial impetus. In this way, residents of colonias populares perceive that one of the main constraints in reaching organization is the difficulty in coming together for a common goal. These constraints affect the social relations, networks and the development of alliances, and are caused by a variety of factors.

5.4.7 Individuality versus cohesiveness

In general, Latin American society is increasingly dominated by individualism. As Lechner argues *"one of the most important changes - considering the communitarian tradition of Latin America- is the increasing individualisation"*, which in many aspects of daily life has taken individuals to think only about themselves. Lechner adds *"It is about satisfying only his/her needs and his/her family's"*⁶ (Lechner 2002). These statements raise the question about how these individualistic attitudes affect the development of public spaces in colonias populares. Community coherence and unity (a sense of community) is crucial in the consolidation of the residents' organization around the public spaces, and this is an aspect that colonias' residents recognize as the main element in achieving any kind of action towards development. In those public spaces which are not developed, one of the main aspects, which hinders development, is the lack of unity prevailing in the social environment of the colonia. The lack of unity is a constraint perceived by the agents of change, and by those promoting the collective organization. If the agents of change fail to encourage the collectivity they will be left alone in the project of public space development. As Señora Yolanda of Colonia Revolucion, who is the main promoter in the development of a small green area and playground, declares *"we would like all our neighbours to cooperate and join us in the activities, however we sadly see that there is not unity here, only the closest ones (The ones who participate)"*

There are people who care about their environment and are willing to participate, and who are attracted to the collective life and social development of the colonia, and therefore are concerned with the public space. These are mainly represented by the main agents of change and their followers. However, colonias' inhabitants affirm that there is a considerable number of people who are individualistic and indifferent towards the public sphere, and who do not have the will to cooperate and participate for the permanence of the public. There is a culture of indifference. As Don Artemio the main promoter of Villahermosa Park of Colonia Ferrocarrilera states *"the neighbours around are not interested, they are not interested at all, and I don't misjudge them, it is part of our culture"*. These attitudes confirm that there is a general attitude of privacy and neglect of the public sphere. The colonias' residents recognize that in order to carry out development this attitude should be overcome; otherwise development will not take place. As Señora Santa affirms:

⁶ Versluys et al (1999:61-62) argues that since cities have tended to support or facilitate the autonomous development of individuals, they have also become the pre-eminent places in which traditional social patterns are being replaced by new ones. The independence gained by individuals has found its clearest expression in the cutting of existing social ties and the establishment of alternative ones.

"We are not united, with this situation, nothing is going to be possible, and we know it, for example we (she and her husband) don't really get along with our neighbours living in front, the thing is that in here, everybody is in their own business,".

Finally, indifference and individualism contribute to an environment of fragmentation of social networks and a lack of organization with which to develop public space. The main agents of change work for participation, communication, spontaneity, and good will within their communities. Residents believe that public space underdevelopment, rather than being about the government's lack of resources or interests, is more about the lack of organization and cohesiveness within the local environment to promote change. As Joaquina of Colonia Tres de Mayo affirms *"if there is unity, the colonia make progress"*. Residents affirm that most people do not want to spend time for the well being of the collectivity, to negotiate with the local authorities, or to meet and discuss the different problems of the colonia. As Señora Galdina of Colonia Ferrocarrilera argues:

"Some residents have told me "I locked myself in at home, I am not interested in what happens out there... yes they (authorities) must improve my front, but I don't want to get involved with the others (residents), I am not interested".

Another factor influencing the organization in popular neighbourhoods is the change in colonias' population (residential mobility⁷) during the consolidation of the settlement. For example at the earlier stages of consolidation in colonia Revolucion, residents of Pedro de Alvarado street did not manage to improve their street because many people were renting plots. These people were temporary and were not interested in the improvement of the street and the colonia. Later on, at high levels of consolidation and improvement as is the present situation of the colonias of this study, colonias have been highly gentrified. This means that higher income city dwellers move to live in the colonias. This situation has increased the likelihood that neighbours do not know each other. They have fewer common interests with which to establish contact and they do not share the same history and needs. This eventually brings about differences in values and attitudes, which are disclosed in the public sphere.

⁷ See Kellett (1992) for an extensive discussion on the residential mobility in popular settlements during their urban consolidation.

5.4.8 Colonias residents and Politics

In order to encourage development of the urban space of the colonia, especially street paving, residents individually get involved with political parties, mainly with the one in power. Political parties have been very influential in the urban consolidation process of colonias populares and people assume that by participating and supporting politicians in campaigns, the colonia could gain development, such as the paving of a street or any other improvement or development. Frequently, agents of change get involved in political issues, which also provoke differences between residents with different ideologies. This eventually affects public space development. Residents with a certain political affiliation do not want to cooperate with those residents that belong to a different party, and the rest of the community think that those 'agents of change', rather than promoting development, are trying to satisfy their own private interest. This brings about community fragmentation and eventually a lack of development. Señora Lilia of Colonia Constituyentes faced this situation when she tried to organize the colonia for the development of Heriberto Jara Street. She was politically active with the PRD (Democratic Revolutionary Party); At the beginning people supported her with the different actions towards organization, however later on, when a part of the community supporting the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) knew that she was politically active in an opposing party, they stopped supporting her and eventually the organization towards the development of the street was fragmented. Señora Lilia continued individually the petitioning process. She regretted that such differences affected public space development and the general improvement of the colonia. In Colonia Revolucion these kinds of differences were also a cause of fragmentation of the council of defence for public spaces as well. In contrast, in the organization for the paving of the street of Paseo de Xalapa also located in Colonia Revolucion, residents managed to overcome political differences. In this street, when residents carried out the organization, some of them were trying to bring forward their political affiliations and promote development under a certain political banner. However, the majority stopped these kinds of attitudes and encouraged the organization in an inclusive way, in spite of the diversity of political ideologies and beliefs. Eventually the residents succeeded with public space development.

5.5 Initiating development within the colonias

5.5.1 Through physical interventions

The defence of communal spaces of the colonias brings about the development of the spaces. Defence can be carried out through development, namely the different threats which threaten the communal space of colonias populares can be the turning point that activates the development process. Colonias' residents become concerned about their outdoor spaces, when they realize that they might lose them. Discussions within the colonia about what to build in communal spaces take place. Residents often defend the spaces however without having a clear idea about their future use. For example, some residents may want markets, or health centres; however those concerned with public spaces try to convince the community about their significance. In this way colonias' residents identify and become aware of the significance of public space, and identify the necessity of spaces for recreation, for children and for the youth of the colonia. They identify the need for open and green spaces to go out and enjoy. In doing so, organization around the public spaces of the colonia takes place. Therefore the beginning of the physical development of public space often occurs through the reaching of a consensus and agreement about the significance of the public space, the generating a common interest, and the overcoming of the constraints and challenges.

In many colonias populares of Xalapa, residents have defended, protected and initiated the development process of their communal spaces through their direct interventions of transformation and improvement. This happened in the public spaces examined here. In Jovita Park of Colonia Revolucion as well as in Mascarenas Park of Colonia Los Pinos development of the space was initiated by the residents' direct interventions. Residents often launch the development of streets through direct physical interventions. In streets the threat is not about the invasion of the space; however the threat lies in the quality of the space restricting the development of everyday activities. In the streets of the colonias, residents initiate the development process by improving pavements, as a solution for the need for good accessibility; the need for security and protection also motivates inhabitants to develop and improve streets. The development of streets is essential in the urban consolidation process of colonias populares. If there are no spaces for recreation, no neighbourhood parks, green areas or playgrounds, the street is the unique public space. In this way the street is not only a space of movement but also a space of socialisation, and therefore its development is very high on

the residents' agenda for urban consolidation. Direct physical interventions take place because colonias' residents appropriate their public space. Individuals and the community transform it through their actions. As seen in Chapter two, this for Pol (1996) is a component of the 'space appropriation processes'. Pol states that after identifying needs and threats, the actions for transformation take place. Through space appropriation, defence and protection and actions of transformations are carried out. In so doing the beginning of the development process through direct physical interventions is triggered.

5.5.2 Physical interventions and defence

Direct physical interventions of improvement and transformation are shields against the invasion of public spaces. In many colonias in the city, residents have carried out different actions of occupation and upgrading to protect their spaces, to show everybody that those spaces belong to the colonia's collectivity; that the spaces are protected; and in case of invasion there will be someone to defend the spaces. Direct actions over the spaces are also carried out by the main agents to promote community awareness and interest in the public spaces, it is an invitation to participate in the permanence of the space. The first and the most common intervention of defence on the space is the setting up of a banner. This is carried out by the residents in different colonias, and also marks the beginning of development process through direct interventions. The residents express the fact that the space is protected by the community, that they will not allow acts of trespassing, that they will challenge those trying to invade, and that the space belongs to the community. In addition they encourage the people of the colonia to support the defence (Figure 5.7).

Some other common interventions undertaken by the residents are cleaning activities and the planting of trees. The 'Council of Defence' of the public space of colonia Revolucion used to encourage people's participation and intervention with flyers, and invitations to carry out cleaning activities. This is also another common strategy observed in other different colonias where promoters of transformation try to encourage the residents to participate by using announcements or posters on the streets (Figure 5.8).



Figure 5.7 Defending colonias public spaces, through direct interventions upon the communal spaces, with banners in which residents express their anger. They also encourage the community to defend and protect it or simply express the name of the green area in order to show that somebody is protecting the space.

Xalapa  **CAMPAÑA: "MI COLONIA LIMPIA"**

Vecino de la calle: _____

Te exhortamos a participar en las tareas de limpieza, el próximo día _____ a partir de las _____.



CAMPAIGN: MY CLEAN COLONIA

Neighbour of the street.....

We invite you to participate in the cleaning activities on (date) from (time)



¡POR LA SALUD DE TU FAMILIA!

¡POR EL MEJORAMIENTO DE TU CALLE!

¡POR EL BIENESTAR DE NUESTRA COLONIA.



For the health of your family!

For the improvement of the street!

For the well being of the colonia!

ATENTAMENTE

Xalapa, Ver., a _____ de _____ de 1996

Patronato Pro-defensa de áreas verdes y vialidades de la col. Revolución

Sincerely yours

The council of defence of the Green areas and Streets of Colonia Revolution

In some cases even when these interventions have taken place, the spaces have suffered invasions. Interventions have been destroyed, as happened in Solidaridad Park of Colonia Revolucion where the trees and plants that were set up to show the status of the spaces were destroyed by invaders. Therefore, direct interventions have to be developed further to avoid any invasion. This has been seen in colonia Revolucion, colonia Los Pinos as well as in Colonia Constituyentes where residents have set up playgrounds in the communal areas to avoid invasion and protect the spaces. Residents know that occupying their communal space, promoting direct physical interventions and initiating improvement and development will grant the spaces their definitive public status and permanence.

5.5.3 Organizing physical interventions

Generally, the direct interventions on the spaces take place on weekends. Residents gathered on Saturdays and Sundays to carry out physical improvements and transformation on a *'faena'* basis. *'Faena'* is a mechanism of communal cooperation and collective work that strongly prevails in Veracruz. The direct physical interventions of the communal spaces are referred by colonias residents as faenas, and they are the result of the organization of the community. Through faenas the main agents of change encourage colonia's residents to join the improvements, and additionally, encourage the sense of belonging and ownership. Two or three persons may start early in the morning and little by little more people join the activities. It is an opportunity to share together, to participate, to achieve improvements, to reinforce social relations and interactions among neighbours, and to reinforce the sense of community. During the *'faena'* people eat together, play, and enjoy the collective activities of improving the public spaces, and more importantly they construct public space socially and physically. Through regular faenas, residents of Carlos Segundo Street initiated improvement and development by carrying out cleaning activities. Later on, they built their pavements with stones. As a result their children would be able to pass more safely to the school located in that street. The road was also frequently refilled with gravel to avoid the street becoming very muddy. In this way, by first achieving organization and cohesion, Carlos Segundo's residents later also triggered public space development (Figure 5.9). The construction of public spaces in the colonias will be analysed in depth in Chapter six.



Figure 5.9 Direct physical interventions. Initiating development through direct physical interventions 'Faenas' in Carlos Segundo Street in Colonia Revolucion. Photographs provided by Señor Jorge Ramirez.

5.5.4 Getting resources for interventions

Another important factor needed to carry out direct interventions and initiate development are the resources available for colonias' residents. Residents gather economic resources through different ways. Some have organised parties and dances, where food and tickets were sold. Some have also organised raffles, and set up money boxes in the communal spaces, as happened in Colonia Los Pinos. Moreover money collections around the colonia may be carried out by the promoters of development. Residents may also gather material resources around the colonia. Residents of the colonia and other external agents may collaborate with materials such as cans of paint, wood, cement, gravel, or sand. It is important to mention that in the past a common practice taken by local authorities to encourage improvement was to provide construction materials for the colonias' residents so they could carry out direct interventions. This was mainly for the construction of pavements. Then residents would build the pavements by themselves or hire labour to do it. This has happened in most streets of colonias populares. Providing construction materials for residents used to be a governmental policy for many years but has almost disappeared under the new, and more democratic, municipal administrations of Xalapa.

The direct interventions not only depend on the economic and material resources but also depend on the knowledge available to the community, which also determines the achievement of different levels of intervention, and rates of consolidation. For example, in Zumarraga Street some residents have skills about construction and they know how to build pavements, so they taught the rest of the community how to help in the construction works. In colonia Ferrocarrilera, the main promoter called Artemio, is a blacksmith who built the playground achieving high quality play equipment and furniture. Artemio visited the main park of the city to see how the slides were used in order to find the right structure and materials to build the ones for Villahermosa Park. Furthermore, the promoters of communal spaces in Colonia Revolucion and Colonia Los Pinos have taken gardening courses to learn what kind of trees and plants are suitable for the parks and to teach the community, mainly the children, how to plant them.

5.6 Developing the public space with the municipality

5.6.1 Applications for development

The process of how the organization and development of the public spaces in colonias populares is fostered by the help of internal and external agents has already been discussed. Based on social networks, agents of change find support to initiate development. In conjunction with the different strategies of defence and direct physical interventions in both streets and in neighbourhood communal spaces, residents carry out the development process with the local authority. Residents promote physical transformations through the requesting and applying to the municipality in order to develop and reach fully consolidated public spaces. At this stage people have to get organized and interact with the municipality. This is a process in which colonias' residents put a great effort and many resources to get their public spaces developed by this external agent. The development of the public space of their neighbourhood with the municipal authorities is another process carried out by colonia's populares which can last for many years.

Within the process of managing the development, residents address the different municipal offices⁸ involved with the development of the public space in order to be included within the public works program of the municipality. This is a crucial stage within the development

⁸ (Citizen participation office, Public Works Office, and Parks and Gardens Office)

process. The achievement of this task depends on the diligence and perseverance of the promoters of change. They have to make several visits to the municipal offices in order to lobby and persuade the municipal authorities and planning officials to help them. They have to take several written requests to the different municipal offices concerned with the management of the urban environment (Figure 5.10). The objective is to be heard by as many so as to receive a positive answer. This stage of the development process involves spending time and money in journeys from the colonia to the municipal offices which are located in the city centre. Residents often leave behind their daily duties such as the domestic activities or jobs in order to find this support. One of the main promoters of the paving of Orozco Street of Colonia Revolucion told us:

"It takes a lot, it takes a lot, when we went to the municipality we used to leave the colonia around 10 or 11 in the morning to the municipality, and once over there, they used to tell us, - no, today we cannot see you, you have to come tomorrow, and perhaps the day after - and so on...once we were there until 3 or 4 in the morning until they paid attention to our requests".

In some other situations whenever the municipal authorities are visiting the colonias, residents chase the authorities to expose their problems and to request help. This is the way the residents involved with Jovita park development got help from the municipality to consolidate the park. President Armando Mendez de la Luz⁹ was visiting colonia Revolucion supervising some other public works, Jovita and her neighbours managed to take the municipal president to their communal space and showed him the different interventions that the community had been carried out to improve their space. Jovita also showed him photographs of the different activities of improvement that the children were carrying out in the space. Jovita politely told the president:

"Mr President, with kind regards and respect, in the name of the children of the colonia I want you to help me to accomplish the little park, we have already started, I am Jovita Rodriguez. I am from Isabela Catolica Street and I work in aid of the children. Therefore I want you to help me, we have set up the first swings, planted trees, and the most important thing is that we are participating"

The municipal president recognized the effort that the community was putting into the transformation of the space and told them that the municipality would continue with the development of the space. In this way the municipality intervened in the improvement of

⁹ President Armando Mendez de la Luz was the Municipal president of the city of Xalapa from 1992 to 1994

Jovita Park. A week later, builders arrived to Jovita Park to continue the improvement. Residents could not believe that the municipality had sent the workers, as they had heard similar promises before and the municipality failed to help them. This time the authorities acknowledged the enthusiasm and commitment of Jovita and the children for the park. In this case, the residents showed that they had tenaciously defended, protected and improved the public spaces in the neighbourhood. Eventually, Jovita Park was integrated into the public works program of the municipality.

This stage of petition and request for the development of public space with the municipality can take many years. The task of getting the park fully developed, the pavement built or the road paved by the municipality becomes part of the project of life for the residents of the colonias. Due to the lack of resources and limited capacity of local authorities to attend the number of demands¹⁰ from the population, residents have to wait many years; even decades to finally get their public space built by the municipality. During this time, residents have to restart the petitioning process every time a new administration comes to govern the municipality. Sometimes the change of civil servants within the same administration requires a new process to be begun. The lack of continuity in planning officials, local programs and plans brings about delays in the petitioning process. For example, residents have to restart the petitioning process when the officials to whom residents had been dealing and negotiating no longer works in the municipality. They have to make new contacts, and get to know the right person to approach again. This prolongs the wait and residents of the colonias often get bored and abandon the petitioning process, which postpones the improvement and development of the colonia.

5.6.2 Community Boards for development

In order to undertake development with the municipality, residents have to create a 'community board for management of public works' (Patronato de Gestión de Obra Pública) which has to be registered in the Citizen Participation Office. This community board is usually managed by the 'agents of change' of the colonia. According to the Citizen Participation Office, it must be made up by a president, secretary, treasurer, and controller-vigilant. The activities of each member are described in Figure 5.11.

¹⁰ The amount of petitions for public services (water, drainage, electricity) in which the demand for public spaces (pavements, road paving, neighbourhood playgrounds and parks) is included received in the municipality of Xalapa every year reached in 2002 an amount of 5000. Only the 5% of these petitions reach development.

C.LIC. ARMANDO MÉNDEZ DE LA LUZ
PRESIDENTE MUNICIPAL DE XALAPA, VER.
P R E S E N T E .

MUY ESTIMADO SEÑOR:

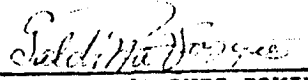
CON EL DEBIDO RESPETO NOS DIRIGIMOS A
USTED PARA ESPONERLE LO SIGUIENTE.

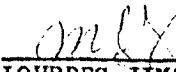
Solicitamos su apoyo para la construc-
ción de un parque sobre el area verde que esta ubicada --
entre las siguientes calles: VILLAHERMOSA, SUR 8, NORTE 8,
Y TIJUANA; Los habitantes de estas calles estamos dispues-
tos a Cooperar con lo que sea necesario, como es mano de
obra, etc.

Estamos seguros que con su participac-
cion tendremos exito en nuestras gestiones lo cual agrade-
cemos en todo lo que vale.

A T E N T A M E N T E .

Xalapa, Ver., 18 de Agosto de 1993


GALDINA VASQUEZ DOMINGUEZ
PRESIDENTE


LOURDES JIMENEZ OLMOS
SECRETARIA

MARIO ELIZALDE FLORES
TESORERO

Mr. Armando Méndez de La Luz
Major

We respectfully ask you, your support for the construction of a park in the green area located on the following streets: Villahermosa, Sur 8, Norte 8 and Tijuana. The residents of these streets are willing to cooperate with whatever is needed such as labour, etc.

We are convinced that with your participation we will have success with our project, with which we are grateful.

Sincerely yours,

Figure 5.10 Petitioning stage. Written request sent to the Major of Xalapa by the residents of Colonia Ferrocarrilera, in order to obtain support from the local authorities to build their park. (Source: Señora Galdina Vasquez Dominguez)

The community board of management for public works is usually created at the beginning of the development process. Once colonias' residents have become aware of the needs, problems, or threats of their public space and also the collective concerns, the municipality is the first to be addressed. The organization of the board must be carried out by the community itself, depending on the social relations and concerned residents. The members of the community board deal with the rest of the residents to reach agreement, common interests, goals, and have to overcome constraints and disagreements. Further, they deal with all the issues that the process of becoming an organized community entails (e.g. overcoming individualism).

Figure 5.11 Community board for public works

Activities

President

- To call the community for meetings as necessary
- To request the Council of Municipal Development (CMD- Municipality) for information about the public works carried out in the community within the Public Works Program of the Municipality. To request information about the project, aims and objectives, budget, community economic contribution, etc.
- To inform the community about the previous aspects.
- To program the related necessary tasks.

Secretary

- To write the meeting's minutes
- To elaborate the necessary written requests to carry out management before the CMD- Municipality
- To file this information.

Treasurer

- To promote and gather the community participation (economic community contribution)
- To deposit the economic contribution in the Municipal Treasury Office in exchange of a official receipt

Controller and Vigilant

- To lead the task of social auditing which means to follow-up, control and supervise the activities carried out along the construction process.

Source: ORFIS (Organo de Fiscalizacion Superior del Estado de Veracruz.)

5.6.3 Constraints within community boards

There are several aspects which hinder both the organization of the community board and also the organization of the whole community around the development process with the

intervention of the municipality. A very common constraint takes place when the community board realizes about the difficulties of dealing with the municipality. They realize that it is a time consuming activity, requiring a great effort, economic resources and a long wait. Therefore, in many cases, the members of the community board get discouraged, leaving behind the strong initial intentions to get development. In this scenario, the president of the community board is the one that usually continues the management and the whole development process alone. The rest of the members abandon their activities within the community board, thus the president has to carry out all the activities that the other members were supposed to manage. The president may accomplish the project by himself/herself as a good agent of change, but however may get discouraged and may not participate in other community projects in the future. In the worst case even the president abandons the managing and negotiation process. This provokes attitudes of disapproval from the rest of the residents who have been relying on the board. The residents may encourage the organization of a new community board; however the continuity of the organization is damaged and fragmented which eventually restricts development. The members of the community board must be truthful agents of change to achieve objectives and endure adversities.

Private interests can also constrain the community boards due to the diversity of objectives, ideas, and ways of thinking of the members of the community. This can give rise to different attitudes and interests which may work against the collective effort. Private attitudes cause the organization of residents to deviate from the main objectives of the organization, and hinder its progress. A common problem faced by residents within the community board is dishonest treasurers. For example, in the council of defence of the public space of colonia Revolucion, the member in charge of the economic resources of the organization stole the money belonging to the community. This reinforced distrust and fragmentation within the community, and eventually restricted participation. Another situation within the council of defence of colonia Revolucion took place when some residents joined the council with the intentions of persuading the community to allow them to occupy one of the communal spaces for housing. Another situation also took place in Colonia Constituyentes when the organization for the defence and protection of the space was affected by the clashes between the residents about who was going to be the president of the community board. In this case, issues of power and leadership within the community organization led to fragmentation and abandonment of the main goals of the community. They did not reach an agreement and the

group initially working for the permanence of the space disappeared. In Chapter two the theories of conflict and collaboration were discussed. Issues of power bring about issues of conflict in the development process; conflicts in turn should in fact generate the potential for collaboration. However, in Xalapa the study of Colonia Constituyentes did not seem to support this idea. The interposition of private interests within the process of coming together for a common goal is the main issue that hinders participation and promotes indifference among colonia's residents. This consequently brings about the abandonment of the aims for public space development. Due to these attitudes, people are discouraged and disappointed; this generates a lack of willingness to participate in the organization for urban change. Further, the lack of honesty and trust worthiness in the social environment lowers the interest of people to get organized and brings forward apathy for the collective issues of the colonia. In this situation residents often think that these individualistic practices are likely to take place and there is therefore no reason to participate.

5.6.4 Citizen participation = an economical contribution

As mentioned in Chapter four, residents and the municipality have to share the cost of the work of development. This means that they have to pay the municipality an economical contribution which is calculated depending on the economical situation of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. In general the residents of colonias populares pay around 15% of the cost of the whole development. For the municipality this economic contribution is known as 'citizen participation'. The municipality of Xalapa even measures citizen participation in terms of the amount of money they get from the population. Municipal officials argue that if residents pay the economic contribution fully, this means that people are participating and getting involved in the development of their colonias. The local authority encourages the population to contribute this money, because in this way the municipality gathers more economic resources in order to develop other beneficial projects for the city and its inhabitants.

5.6.5 Community-municipality meetings

Many meetings take place along the development process. Firstly meetings are organized by the promoters of development. These only involve colonias' residents, and aim to consolidate the collective organization to carry out defence in the case of the invasion of public spaces. Secondly, meetings take place to organize direct interventions, on both communal spaces, and streets. Meetings also take place to organize the community to proceed with development

applications before the local authority. Later on, when the local authority gets involved to continue the development, the meetings are with the municipal officials. Usually these to negotiate the community's economical contribution, as well as to allow discussion on the different physical issues of the development such as its design form, materials, and construction. The meetings usually take place on the streets in the evenings after six pm, so that most residents can attend. They are chaired by members of the community board and members of the Citizen Participation Office of the municipality should be present. In some cases by members of the Public Works Office also attend. The meetings are the arena where the different actors involved in development try to impose their interests and positions in the development process. In this environment, both local authority representatives and residents disclose what they know about the environment, what they think is right for the development, and the kind of solutions should be carried out. It is an arena of discussion and social interaction, where the negotiation of the future of the public space takes place in either peaceful or conflictive environments. Agreements and disagreements occur, and each actor makes use of their power and knowledge to impose and dominate the nature of the development of the public space. Eventually the result of this social interaction is reflected in the form and character of the public space in the colonias populares.

5.6.6 Negotiations for economic contribution

In the meetings, the community has to agree and negotiate with the municipality about the budget of the works to be developed. They have to reach a consensus about the amount of money residents have to contribute for the development. This part of the process is a very difficult one; if residents do not reach any agreement with the municipality on this point; they risk losing the development of their public space. This would mean all their previous efforts were wasted. This is another main reason the development of the public space does not often take place in the colonias. When the local authorities detect that the residents are not willing to pay their share, and that it is difficult to reach agreement about the cost of the development, they simply step back and take the money allocated for that project to another street or colonia where residents have reached agreement. This is disappointing for those left behind, especially in light of all the efforts made to reach this stage within the development process. An example of this type of result is presented below. It is the case of Fernando V Street of Colonia Revolucion where Señora Yolanda was the main promoter of the street paving:

"In here people made a mistake, we managed to get into the public works program of the municipality in 1996, the municipality was going to pave our street and we had to pay around 100 thousand pesos. They had given us the opportunity to pay it in five instalments we had to pay the first one of 15 thousand. The municipal architect came several times to negotiate with us, we had the meetings on the street and every body came, we talked about the project, about the budget and everybody was aware of everything. However, some people agreed and some others did not, some said that it was too expensive. In this street, there are a lot of construction workers and they are supposed to know the real cost of materials and so on, so some of them started to disapprove the budget and then the others follow them, finally every body stepped back, and look at the street, it is still unpaved, it is a shame "

(Señora Yolanda, Fernando V Street of Colonia Revolucion)

5.6.7 Managing the economic contribution

Once the residents of the colonia have been granted the development of their public space and the actors from the municipality and the community have agreed on the 'community participation', the treasurer of the community board has to gather the economic contribution in the colonia. This situation also results in conflict within the community, as well as in the relation to the municipality. Taking into account that the economic situation of the majority of the population is not good, it is very difficult for the majority of the residents to pay the economic contribution. Furthermore people are very cautious about giving money to the members of the community board due to their previous disappointing experiences of fraud and robbery, as happened in the council of defence of Colonia Revolucion. Nowadays, there is a common perception within the colonias about the lack of honesty of the treasurer in the management of economic resources of the community. Therefore residents, who take the role of treasurer, frequently feel uncomfortable because of the bad comments expressed about them by the rest of the community. Another common attitude within the colonias, which brings about conflictive situations, takes place when residents are not willing to pay because they want to get the development without paying their economic contribution. In this case, some argue that it is the government's obligation to provide the development of the public space. Further, some others may argue that they have some friendship with certain public authority or politician; and finally some others do not believe in the local authorities' commitment to carry out the development, and thus they do not pay. Within these scenarios, the treasurer of the community board commonly faces difficult and conflictive interactions with his/her neighbours while gathering the economic contribution for development. They may even break social relations with those not willing to contribute, who are regarded as blocking and obstructing the progress of the colonia. The residents engaged with development eventually get disappointed with those not willing to contribute, because with these attitudes

the development of the space is under threat. In these situations communication is very important within the community, as the presidents of community boards recognize. Communication between residents and the community board is essential to avoid conflicts within the community and to lead to the success of the development. Honesty and transparency are essential in the management of the economic resources to encourage everybody's contribution and avoid conflicts. For example, one of the main promoters of the paving works in Zumarraga Street of Colonia Revolucion states: *"In our street, everybody paid their contribution, here we worked with honesty, and we regularly organized meetings to inform about the finances"*. Further, in this street, some residents were open enough to tell the community that they did not have economic resources to contribute, that it was not a matter of lack of will or interest for public space development, it was about their precarious economic situation. Therefore, the rest of the community agreed to pay for them in order to carry out the development. In contrast, in Juan de la Barrera Street and Isabela Catolica Street in the same colonia, there were residents who did not pay their contribution, they did not show interest, and they never communicated with the community board. Therefore they did not get pavement outside their houses. This shows how the lack of economic participation of some residents, and the lack of agreement with the rest of the community, affects the development process.

On one hand, the lack of agreement on the economic contribution may be a factor of underdevelopment; on the other hand many colonias' residents use the economic contribution as a tool to promote the development of their streets. Especially relating to street paving, residents offer a significant amount of money to the municipality in advance to encourage the municipal authorities to invest in the urban space of the community. This advance payment encourages the municipality to include their street in the program of public works. In this way, residents show that they are organized, cooperative and ready to carry out improvements. Zumarraga Street is an example of this, where residents achieved strong organization and had enough economical resources; they therefore promoted the paving of their street by paying in advance for the work yet to be done.

5.6.8 Negotiations for form

Once the colonias' residents have gained favour with the municipality, the interaction between the stakeholders becomes a rich arena of perceptions, opinions, objectives and interests. Both local authorities and residents disclose what they know about the environment,

what they think is right for the development, and the kind of solutions that should be carried out. As mentioned earlier, a diversity of individuals and groups, make up the population of the colonias, and all show different interests. This results in many discussions about the future development of the spaces. In most cases residents have different opinions and priorities according to their different needs and interests, which can be determined by gender, age, and role in the colonia environment. As Carr states, these actors “*claim spaces in order to carry out desired activities or achieve a desired state*” (Carr 1992:169). Furthermore, the community’s interests compete with those interests brought forward by the local authority. At this stage, the development process becomes a place of discussion, contestation and even conflict, where each actor tries to impose and dominate the process according to their own interests, knowledge and power. As was seen in Chapter two, the ideas of the development process as a ‘battlefield’ of Bentley (1999) and as place of contestation of Low (2003) are considered to be very important. To illustrate these aspects of the development process, the case of the development of the park of Colonia Tres de Mayo will be drawn on. This demonstrates that the interaction within the colonia, among colonias’ residents as well as between the residents and the local authority takes place in an environment of struggle and contestation.

In the development of Colonias Unidas Park of Colonia Tres de Mayo, an interesting interaction took place when deciding the future shape of the Park. In this colonia there were diverse opinions and interests concerning the development of the park. This brought about



Figure 5.12 Open space in Colonia Tres de Mayo. The space was used by the youngsters of the colonia for football matches. They were not happy with the projects propose by the ecclesiastical group of the colonia. (Photograph provided by Señora Joaquina Cortez).

competition and conflicting interests between different groups from the colonia. The space was a big area and it had been used for many years by the youngsters of the colonia for football matches. There was a group of people who organized the football league in which there were about 30 different teams. The space was a main sport area for colonia Tres de Mayo and the neighbouring colonias.

The development of the space was promoted by the ecclesiastical group of the colonia from the church which is located in front of the space. The ecclesiastical group wanted to promote the improvement of the space according to the needs of the majority of the population, not only fulfilling the needs of a small group of the population. The ecclesiastical group invited the colonia to participate in meetings and also used questionnaires in the colonia and in neighbouring colonias. In the meetings and questionnaires, the majority of the residents of the colonias stated that the main needs of the community were the need of public spaces for recreation and sports and the need of a day care centre. However, not all agreed with the idea of building all these in the space. Those using the space for football matches completely disagreed with the new ideas for the space, and conflict took place between the different groups. The football players tried to block the ideas of the wider community represented by the ecclesiastical group. Firstly, the football players did not agree with the idea of losing the control of the space. They even argued that they were given the space by a previous municipal authority; however they did not have any documents, and therefore nobody believed them. They also stated that the proposed ideas were not interesting, that the space was already allocated only for football matches, and therefore they did not want anything else in the space. Furthermore, they argued that there was no need of a day care centre, because there was already one close to the colonia. In this way the football players tried to impose their views and opinions in order to keep the space to fit to their needs and interests. The ecclesiastical group tried to defend their ideas supported by the wider community. They also used the results of the questionnaires in which the majority had expressed the real needs of the collectivity. They took into account the need for a football pitch in the new development. In the different community meetings the football players were always invited, one of them was even part of the community board to promote the project before the local authorities. However, in spite of the ecclesiastical group's effort to integrate all the different interests into a common objective, the football players never showed interest at all, and they finally did not participate in the organization to promote the development of the communal space. Later on, the football player who was member of the community board resigned from his position. In spite of these disagreements, the ecclesiastical group carried out the development of the project with the help of some students of architecture. They planned a park integrating in the design the different spaces and elements that fulfilled the needs of the colonia including a football court with stands, so people could watch the matches, a playground, a building for the day care centre and a library. Additionally, the design which was developed by the students

and the residents integrated the urban space through pedestrian areas, and pleasant green spaces (Figure 5.13)

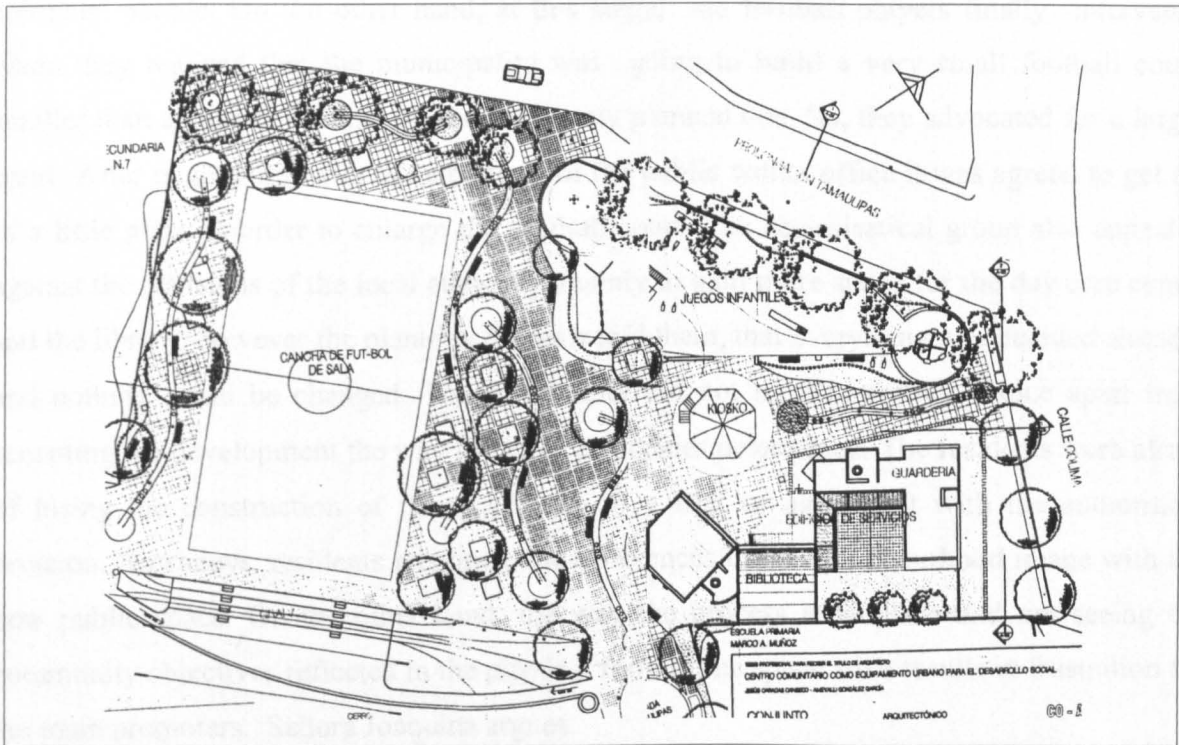


Figure 5.13 Residents' aspirations for their public space which include a football court with stands, day-care centre and library, playground, and pedestrian streets. This is a project done by residents and some students of architecture. Source: Caracas Canseco, J. and A. Gonzales Garcia (2001)

In order to promote the project to the local authorities, the ecclesiastical group formed a community board. However, once the local authorities intervened they also tried to bring forward their interests and dominate the development process. In these interactions, residents also faced contested and conflicting situations. After three years, in the year 2000, the community board of Colonia Tres de Mayo gained success in the development application before the local authorities. Afterwards the authorities took control of the development process of the public space. The municipal authorities told the residents that the construction of the park would be carried out, however it would not be as the residents were proposing it. The pedestrian areas were replaced by vehicular streets (according to the City's development plan¹¹), which resulted in a 50% reduction of the initial space, and therefore the reduction of the football pitch, the elimination of the stands; Also very little space was left for the playground, and almost no space for the day care centre and library which residents were planning to run. All these changes provoked a conflicting and competitive situation between

¹¹ Plan de Ordenamiento Urbano del Area Metropolitana (Xalapa-Banderilla-Coatepec-Emiliano Zapata-San Andrés Tlalahuayocan, Veracruz) Secretaria de Desarrollo Urbano de Veracruz. (1998)

stakeholders. On one hand the ecclesiastical group were very disappointed by all the changes in the project, and argued that what it was proposed was based on the real needs of the colonias' people. On the other hand, at this stage, the football players finally intervened when they realized that the municipality was going to build a very small football court, smaller than a quarter the size of the previously planned one. So, they advocated for a larger court. After negotiating with the architects of the public works office it was agreed to get rid of a little plaza in order to enlarge the football court. The ecclesiastical group also appealed against the decisions of the local authority, mainly to gain more space for the day care centre and the library; however the planning officials told them, that everything was decided already, and nothing could be changed. The community did not have any other choice apart from accepting the development the way the local authorities determined. The residents were afraid of losing the construction of their park due to a lack of agreement with the authorities' decision. Nowadays, residents recognize the differences in the neighbourhood image with the new public space. On the other hand, the way the process took place and not seeing the community objectives reflected in the physical form of the space stills results in frustration for the main promoters. Señora Joaquina argues:

"It is very bad, that the authorities do not take into account the real meaning of what people ask for. Why do the local authorities always do what they want in our colonias? They never ask people, what we really need; if they at least cared about, they would ask us what our urgent needs are, and they would probably contribute to the development of the colonias with interventions that truly benefit the colonias' families".

It is interesting to see here how the different interests shape the process, the different groups within the colonia wanted different interventions in the space according to their needs. Finally, the municipality, according to their interests, political agendas, and a desire to save money, and do a quicker intervention intervened and turned around the process. In this case the physical development of the public space reflected the local authorities' interests. The negotiation of the public space production is a struggle of interests. In Chapter two, the theory of contestation of Setha Low (2000) was discussed. This is seen in Colonia Tres de Mayo in the development of Colonias Unidas Park. Setha Low states "*physical space at the urban level is ordered by and reflects the power structures to which the community is subordinated, although the community may contest this subordination through local political action*" (Low 2000:50).

5.6.9 Negotiation for materials

Negotiation for the kind of materials with which to carry out the construction of public space also takes place between the local authorities and the community. This occurs in the meetings within the development process of both streets and parks. For example in one of the communal spaces of colonia Revolucion, the municipality proposed the community to build pedestrian paths. They proposed building with gravel and sand to which the residents did not agree. Residents opposed this proposition arguing that this was a very temporary intervention which the rains and storms common in Xalapa, would destroy quickly. Residents proposed that instead of gravel and sand the pedestrian paths should be built with paving stone. Furthermore, residents also proposed that they would cooperate with their labour and provide more money to reduce costs. More importantly, they argued that if something was going to be improved, it would be better to do it permanently rather than temporarily. Residents also wanted to show that there was lots of interest behind the improvements. Moreover, they want to show the wider community that the improvement was carefully done. In this case resident's proposal was accepted by the local authorities. However, this does not always happen, and negotiations about materials are usually conflictive and contested, especially because the local authority commonly tries to impose their interests and do the most with very little economic resources. That is to say, the municipality prefers to do 'quantity than quality'. In turn the colonias' residents fight back in support of durability and a longer term vision.

The community often resist local authorities' impositions, as happened in the street of Francisco Orozco in Colonia Revolucion. In this street, residents did not accept the development of their street, which made the municipality transfer the interventions to other colonia. The negotiation and the lack of agreement were about the materials with which the street would be built. The municipality offered to pave the street with asphalt; however the residents wanted to have the street paved with hydraulic concrete. This discussion is a common one in the development of streets. Colonias' residents usually reject the construction of the street with asphalt. The asphalt used in the colonias is a material of low durability and quality and after a couple of years, with the heavy rains falling in the region plus the lack of maintenance; streets usually get full of holes and deteriorate. On the other hand, to have the road and the pavements done with hydraulic concrete means that they would have a street with good quality and appearance for many years and for future generations. Furthermore, since residents have to pay the economic contribution for the development, they argue that if

they have to spend money, it is better to spend a bit more, and invest in something worthy. However, the municipality tries to impose their views. In the case of Orozco Street, the municipality argued that the street was a secondary road with little vehicular traffic and that is why paving with asphalt was the best option to avoid expensive costs in the development. Residents strongly rejected the authorities' proposal. Some residents argued that the local authority always tried to impose its will without taking into account the peoples' opinion. Further, some other residents even proposed other materials such as cobble stone, but the local authority did not accept it. These discussions took place in an environment of conflict, disagreement, and confrontation. Both the community and the authorities competed to impose their views and this sometimes resulted in violent situations. The communication of the negotiation process was disrupted in a community meeting where even physical confrontation almost took place. The lack of agreement in this negotiation resulted in the authorities telling the residents of these street *"If you do not accept the project, if you do not want the development of your street we take it to another colonia, you either take it or you let it go"* (Señora Susana Jaimes). Moreover, in this case the authorities always reminded the residents that they were very lucky to have gained public space development in the colonia, and that there were thousands of unanswered requests and demands from many other colonias and yet they still complained. Facing this kind of ultimatum the residents of Orozco Street reflected on the effects that the rejection of the municipality proposal would have on their street. They realized that if they did not accept the development the way the municipality proposed their street would remain undeveloped for many years, *"until who knows when"* (Señora Susana Jaimes). Therefore, they accepted the development, although with dissatisfaction. In contrast to what happened in this case and in the park of Colonia Tres de Mayo, there have been cases where residents have totally refused the development, and have preferred to wait for a new municipal administration who are willing to pave their street with concrete. Colonias' residents have argued: *"we are citizens and we deserve opportunity and choice, we have the right to defend our opinion, however they do not respect it"* (Committee of Improvement of Arrillaga Street, Colonia Alvaro Obregon).

5.6.10 Imposing improvement

So far, we have seen how the negotiations for different aspects of public space improvement and development take place within the interaction between the local authorities and the colonias. These interventions have been initiated by residents who later encourage the intervention of the municipality, as happened in all the different examples of public spaces

presented so far. However negotiations also take place when projects are not initiated from the bottom of the community, by colonias residents, but when projects are initiated from the top, by the local authorities. In these cases as well, the improvement process becomes a rich arena of perceptions, interest and objectives, in which different degrees of acceptance come into play. Especially in situations where the priorities and needs of residents may be different from what the local authority think is needed. To illustrate this, we will draw on the case concerning the construction of Solidaridad park of Colonia Revolucion. Residents had been defending the space from different acts of privatization and invasion as has happened in the other spaces. However, residents did not go beyond to promote the construction of the park because the main priority of the residents was to get basic services such as water and drainage. Residents had been lobbying the local authority to get these services. However as an answer to their petitions, instead of getting the provision of water and drainage, residents got the construction of a park. The majority of the residents did not agree with the construction of the park, because they were requesting some other services of greater importance for residents' daily lives. Residents told the municipal authorities that they did not want a park, and that it was better for them to spend that money in the water and drainage network. However the local authority told them that it was not possible because the budget was sent from the federal government only for parks and not for other services, and if the money was not spent in parks, it had to be returned. Residents appealed to this answer arguing that a park was an unnecessary luxury at that moment, in their colonia where not even water and drainage was provided yet. These arguments found in colonia Revolucion are similar to what Hordijk found in low-income settlements in Peru. In this case an inhabitant argued against the construction of a park during a community meeting, at very early stages of settlement of consolidation:

"I want to discuss whether this is the right moment to work on a park. I do want to have a park, but in 5 years or so. I first want to pay off my water and sewerage. Then I hope we will obtain loans to build the road, or that the government does it. Once when have the roads. I think it is a good point to start to create a park. Maybe, we will have more water by then as well" (Hordijk, 2000: 221).

These arguments in Mexico and in Peru, demonstrate the priorities of the popular residents in the settlement consolidation process. It is evident that public space interventions are not well received when basic services have not been yet satisfied. In Colonia Revolucion, those carrying in out the petitioning process for water and drainage were finally convinced by the

local authority who argued that in the colonia there were a great number of poor people and mainly children without a place to play. Residents finally accepted the development of the park and try to spread the attitude of agreement to the wider community, although without much success. Within this situation, even some residents thought that the main promoter (Señora Yolanda) was satisfying her personal interests rather than satisfying the interests of the community. Señora Yolanda tried to convince the community by arguing that it was worth accepting the park, because their surrounding environment would look much better. Also if they were given the park for free, without paying, or cooperating with labour at all, they should have to accept it. Eventually the municipality built the park in spite of the opposition. In Chapter two the role of power in the transformation process was discussed. The situation that took place in Solidaridad Park as well as in the imposition of materials for street paving are examples that remind us about what Habraken argues about power and transformation:

“If the dominating party, by its action, is improving the site in the eyes of the subjected powers, the change will be perceived by them as desirable. If the action is not seen as an improvement in the eyes of the subjected powers, the change will be experienced as oppression” (Habraken 1983:61).

5.7 Conclusions

This chapter demonstrates that the existence, development, and permanence of the public space in the colonias populares depend on the residents, on their knowledge, interests, and concerns. It has been seen how the land allocated for public space is continuously threatened by different internal and external agents. Fortunately, within the colonias there are agents who acknowledge the importance of these spaces within the colonia environment and initiate the development process of public space. Residents carry out actions of protection, defence, and improvement; without these actions the few public spaces that do exist in the popular habitat would simply not exist. It has been also examined as to how colonias' residents interact within the community to achieve organization, to promote public space development, and later, to promote development with the local authorities. Processes of production of the space are carried out in an environment of competition and conflict. The residents involved in these processes compete for the availability of land for public spaces, struggle within the colonia to engage the interest of the community in their public spaces in order to reach organization to carry out defence, direct interventions and promote development. In addition, there is an inherent political dimension in the process in which the community struggle with the

municipality to achieve the permanent consolidation of their spaces. Later on, an interaction occurs where issues of power, knowledge, culture and capital come into play to dominate the development process and the resulting form of the space. In the following chapter we move from the social production to the material production of public space and the resulting form, we will scrutinize how the materiality of public space is produced and how the public space form precipitates out from the social processes discussed here.

Chapter Six



Materialising Public Space

Materialising Public Space

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6.1 Introduction

“Cities rise and fall. Streets are broadened. Buildings are taken down and new ones go up. Rooms are redecorated. Porches are added, doors painted, holes knocked into walls and windows walled in, trees are planted, hedges clipped, sewers buried. Roads are paved and ditches dug. Monuments are erected. The site is subject to transformation. When we see the site over time, we can study the changes that occur. This will reveal the powers that act on the site and the ways in which they relate to one another” (Habraken 1998:14-17).

Having studied the factors that foster and constrain the beginning of the development of public space in the previous chapter, this chapter will turn to the physical production of the space. Public space materialization takes place as a consequence of a successful collective organization through which stakeholders are able to trigger the development process. In the following pages, the materialization of public space is explored, studying the interactions between the different agents and the space in order to construct public spaces in the neighbourhood environment. Hence, this chapter scrutinizes all the different physical interventions that the residents and external actors carry out to construct the character and identity of the public realm of the colonias.

Firstly, how spaces are configured in terms of their allocation is addressed with respect to the surrounding urban fabric. Then what residents plan and visualize in these spaces for the future improvement and life of their public places is explored. These ideas in turn influence how the spaces are constructed. Finally, the chapter explores the construction process, form and physical qualities of streets and parks of the colonias, including all the urban elements that define the character of the public environment of colonias populares.

6.2 Locating public uses

6.2.1 The street network

“The blocks define the space or the spaces define the blocks” (Carmona 2003:89)

As in many other cities, the public space network of colonias populares is the result of plot subdivision. The street network is the result of the allocation of plots which are located back to back, each having a frontage onto the street and a shared boundary at the rear; this is the typical plot pattern of colonias. The blocks defined the public space network, which in

colonias populares is mostly made up of streets, and occasionally by plazas, squares or courtyards. The open space is from the resulting form of the blocks, which in most cities in Mexico and Latin America, frequently follow the typical rectilinear grid pattern. However, due to the uneven and very hilly topography, the urban morphology of Xalapa is very irregular. This affects the form of the streets and other public spaces around the whole city, and is characterized by irregular shapes, and curved roads. In cases where regular and orthogonal forms are kept, the result is dramatic inclination of roads and very steep streets are found¹. In many settlements in Xalapa these streets become pedestrian roads with very steep stairs (Figure 6.1).



Figure 6.1 Steep streets. Due to the topographical characteristics of the city of Xalapa, many streets in colonias populares are made of stairs, as seen above.

The street is the prime public space that cannot be absent in the public space network. Open spaces for recreational uses may be absent; however streets must be always there for circulation and access to the private plots. Different scales of streets are found in colonias populares, defining the road hierarchy which is constituted by main streets and secondary streets. In most cases, the main streets are wide enough to allow vehicular traffic, and very few pedestrian routes are found.

The main streets of the colonias usually cross different colonias linking different parts of the city. These are important roads which provide the main space for movement, communication and integration of new urban extensions with the consolidated city. In general, the main street is the first to be improved in the colonia, which gives opportunity for it to be developed as the commercial hub of the settlement. The main street is usually wide (around 13-15 meters) from which secondary roads branch out with smaller dimensions (around 10-12 meters) and usually found less improved than the main street. These dimensions match those specified by the

¹ Kellett (2003a:43-44) offer us evidence from the popular settlements of Santa Marta, Colombia about how in the planning process of popular settlements those involved make great efforts to keep the orthogonal grid to achieve a standard settlement layout, sometimes overriding the logic of topography. Kellett argues that the most vital aspect of the grid layout is that it will be read as conventional, and have the potential to develop and become the same as other part of the cities. These principles mean that the dwellers are attempting within the constraints of their resources to create urban form and housing areas which are close as possible to the dominant conventions.

urban law of Veracruz² (Leyes del Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz, 1979). Thus, these dimensions are found in the colonias in which a governmental agency was involved in the settlement planning. This is the case in almost of the colonias studied in this thesis, except in Colonia Tres de Mayo where the pattern is not very clear. This is due to the difficult topography where the colonia is located and because the colonia was planned without the intervention of governmental agencies. In Xalapa, the topography is an important aspect in the development of the city and its colonias. We will see later that it is also a determinant factor in the allocation of private and public spaces.

The street boundaries are defined depending on the appropriation of the land for private uses as well as on the levels of consolidation of building structures. The morphological nature of the street evolves along with the consolidation of dwellings. At the beginning of the settlement formation when most of the buildings are built with non-permanent materials and they do not occupy the whole plot, the street boundaries are not defined either. It is difficult to know the distinction between the private and the public boundaries. This becomes even harder to distinguish when these boundaries are blurred through the development of resident's daily practices (Figure 6.2 (1 & 2)). Along with the consolidation of building structures and first interventions in areas outside the plot the street begins to be defined. The façade of consolidated buildings defines the boundaries of the private and the public which definitively defines the form of the street. (Figure 6.2(3))

Another aspect contributing to the morphological character of the street is the invasion of the public space at the micro-scale, namely at household level. In many cases households have invaded the thoroughfare in order to satisfy their private interests by extending the dwellings towards the street. This strongly impacts the boundaries and the continuity of the building facades and pedestrian routes, by modifying street boundaries and giving the street an irregular shape, it can even affect the continuity of pavements (Figure 6.1(4 & 5)). This is not well perceived by pedestrians, as it is considered an invasion of public space to obstruct the pedestrian path. Further this is not appreciated either by other residents because this kind of invasions affects the formal order of the street and the alignment of the facades.

² Government of the State of Veracruz, Laws of Veracruz- Regulations for merging and subdivision of land (Leyes de Veracruz, Reglamento para la Fusion, Subdivision, Relotificacion y Fraccionamiento de Terrenos para el Estado, Gaceta Oficial, 1979)



Figure 6.2 The level consolidation of buildings defines street shape and boundaries. Follow the sequence of the photographs to see how the street shape evolves together with the definition of the private space. The buildings create sense of enclosure and the sense of spatial containment is created.

6.2.2 Public Space allocation

In the colonias populares studied here, the allocation of public space for recreational purposes took place from the beginning of settlement formation. At certain points, there were planning authorities³ involved in the authorization and legalization of the settlements who in turn requested the developers to allocate land for public and urban facilities. That was the case of Colonia Tres de Mayo, Colonia Los Pinos, and Colonia Ferrocarrilera. Furthermore, in the case of Colonia Revolucion and Colonia Constituyentes the land subdivision was promoted by the State of Veracruz Government under its low-income governmental housing programs and therefore allocated land for public use. The state planning authorities⁴ require that 20% of the saleable area is left as a donation area (10% for urban facilities and 10% for green open areas) This is an area which is granted to the local government, where urban facilities, public spaces and green spaces should be allocated in order to fulfil daily needs of the people living in the new colonia .Although this percentage is stated in the law for land subdivision, it is not very often respected. By simply observing the neighbourhoods of Xalapa, it is evident that there are large extensions of urban space with very little land allocated for public recreational space and green areas. This is confirmed by Acosta (Acosta 2000: 519) who argues, “...new

³ This is managed by the Oficina de Patrimonio del Estado de Veracruz (Office of Patrimony) and by the Oficinas de Ordenamiento Urbano y Desarrollo Urbano (Urban Planning and development offices) based on the law for land subdivision for residential purposes.

⁴ Government of the State of Veracruz, Laws of Veracruz- Rules for merging, subdividing and plotting land in the State. (Leyes de Veracruz, Reglamento para la Fusion, Subdivision, Relotificacion y Fraccionamiento de Terrenos para el Estado, Gaceta Oficial, 1979)

neighbourhoods, colonias, and districts, show scarcities in the arrangement, design, and conception of public spaces of integration..." Later on, she states:

"public spaces are found unlinked, dispersed and disjointed in the new urban developments with some intentions of structuring new centres of life, but they do not represent images easily read by the urban inhabitant"(Acosta 2000: 521).

The problem is aggravated in the colonias where the little land allocated for public purposes, remains vacant, abandoned, and unprotected, and therefore invaded and privatized as was seen in the previous chapter. Furthermore, commonly in popular settlements in Mexico and in Latin America, land for public spaces is rarely set aside. Very often, public spaces in popular settlements are the result of residents' appropriation of land that is not really meant to be for public use as found by Riaño in Ecuador (1996). In some other cases open spaces have been left because they have not been suitable for private uses.

The public space in the colonias is the result of the decisions made by those involved in the formation of the colonia. These are constricted and/or fostered by a variety of forces; legal, a high demand of land for housing, the environmental characteristics of the area, and topography. This causes questions to be asked about what the common attitude towards the allocation of public spaces is in the colonias of Xalapa. In addition, it also raises the questions of which part of the land is commonly designated for public use? These issues will be explored using different examples of public spaces in the colonias from this study.

a) Colonia Los Pinos: Mascarenas Park

In colonia Los Pinos there is a public space located on the streets of Mascarenas between the streets of *Circuito del Recuerdo* and *Del Paso*, this is Mascarenas Park. In this colonias, the group of families promoting the land subdivision in this land decided to locate the green area requested by the planning authorities in a residual space as desired by the residents. The colonia founders decided to allocate the donated area in the part of the terrain least suitable for building houses. This means the land has a very uneven and difficult topography. It is on a dip which is affected by floods and therefore is permanently swamped. This public space was located in *"area where nobody would be interested to buy, so that's why we decided to leave it there"* as affirmed by the residents (Figure 6.3). In colonia Los Pinos, the allocation of public space represented little importance for both residents and authorities. They allocated their public space in a residual space in the margins of the colonia, where nobody was interested in building housing.

Colonia Los Pinos: Mascarenas Park



Figure 6.3 Public space in Los Pinos. Public space left as a requirement to legalize the colonia, on an area where nobody was interested in building housing. It is located on the margins of the colonia. (Photographs provided by residents)

Public space in Colonia Ferrocarrilera

In colonia Ferrocarrilera, there are two communal spaces. Although nowadays they link Ferrocarrilera to the neighbouring colonias, it can be seen that in the settlement formation, the spaces for public use are leftovers as a result for the allocation for private uses. These public spaces are located on plots with irregular shapes, and on the margins of the colonia like in Colonia Los Pinos. The space studied in this thesis is the one located in Villahermosa Street which is very long and narrow. It seems that it was difficult to locate another block of plots for housing, therefore it was left for the require donation areas (Figure 6.4). A resident states *“when they (authorities and developers) create the colonia these areas were leftovers”*

c) Colonia 3 de Mayo: Colonias Unidas Park

Another area set aside for communal space and public use on difficult terrain is the communal space of Colonia Tres de Mayo, where nowadays Colonias Unidas Park is located. Like the public space of Colonia Los Pinos, in this colonia the donation area was also located on a dip; no building structures could be built easily here and if built, they would be affected with floods, as happens with two schools and some dwellings located in the same area. A resident states *“as it was a swamp, full of water, we (residents) decided to leave the donation area in that part”*. By chance, the public space in this colonia got a prime location, as it is located in a central area, in a place from which different colonias developed around it on the higher surrounding terrain. The dip in the centre was left as vacant land. It is a point where two colonias converge: colonia 3 de Mayo and Colonia J.J. Panes. This place is where inhabitants of other nearby colonias pass in order to reach central areas of the city (Figure 6. 5). This is another example where public space has been allocated in residual space. The space represented little importance for residents due to its difficult physical characteristics.

d) Colonia Constituyentes: A Green Area

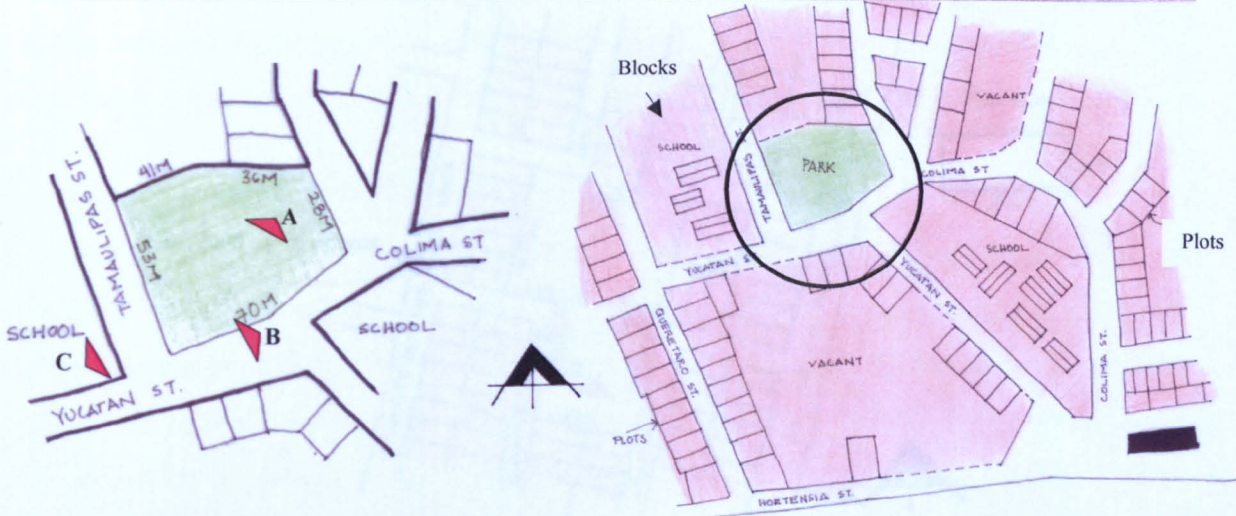
Continuing with the theme of the previous paragraphs, another public space in this study is the space located in Colonia Constituyentes. This green area is in the very initial stage of transformation, and is located on Constituyentes Street and Apatzingan Street. This space is also located on a very uneven terrain; on land where the construction of buildings would be very difficult, and therefore it is unattractive for buyers. The space was the most uneven space of the area, with a dip and a huge rock in the middle, characteristics which prevented the allocation of plots for housing in this land. Although the space is centrally located within the settlement layout, it is surrounded by the back of the plots.

A Public space in Colonia Ferrocarrilera



Figure 6.4 The communal open spaces allocated on the margins of Colonia Ferrocarrilera. (Photographs provided by residents).

Colonia Tres de Mayo: Colonias Unidas Park



Public space before transformation

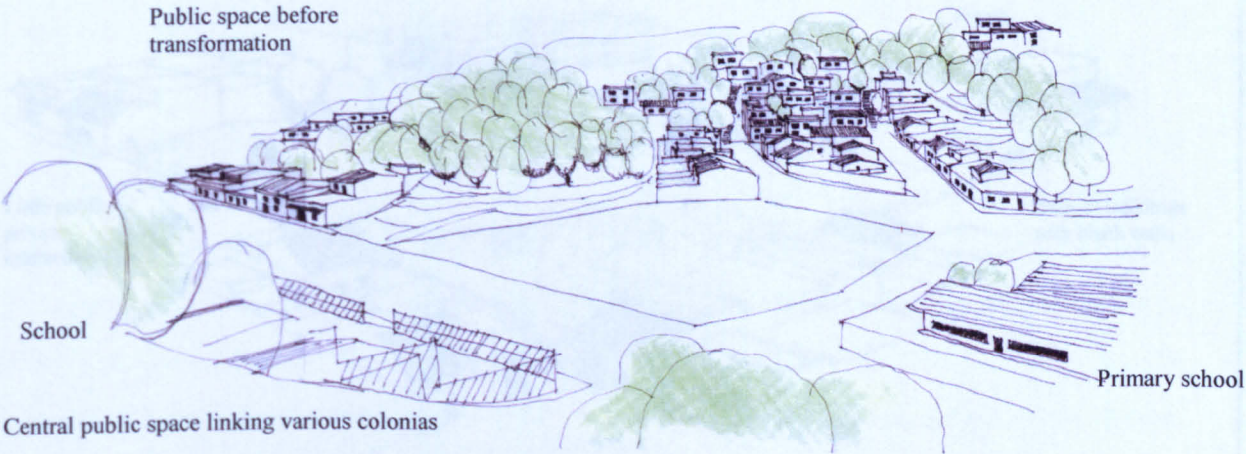


Figure 6.5 Public space of Colonia Tres de Mayo. Space with an area of 5000 sq .m. with a good location in relation to the surrounding colonias, however the space gets flooded. (Photographs provided by residents).

Colonia Constituyentes: A Green Area

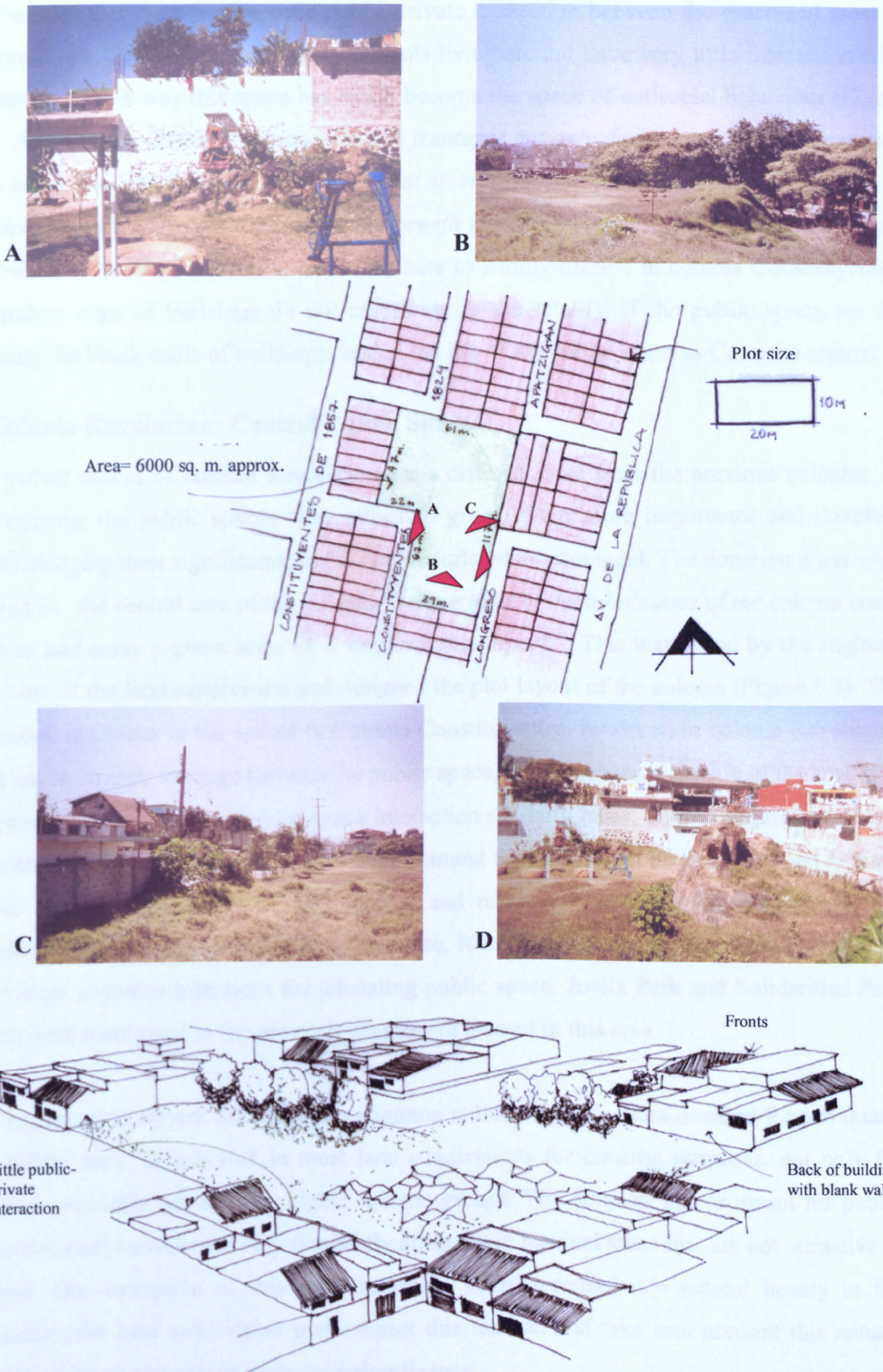


Figure 6.6 Public space in Colonia Constituyentes. The dwellings' back walls face this public space. The topographical characteristics were the reason for leaving the space as public.

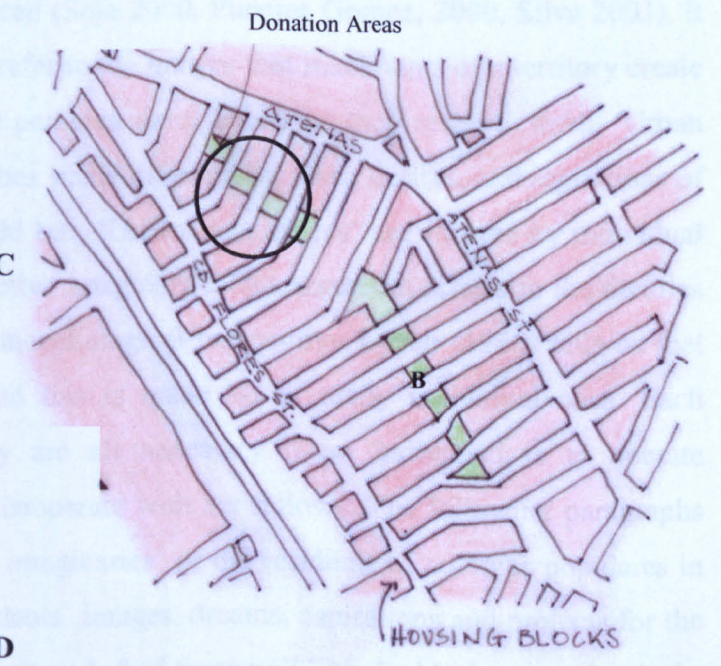
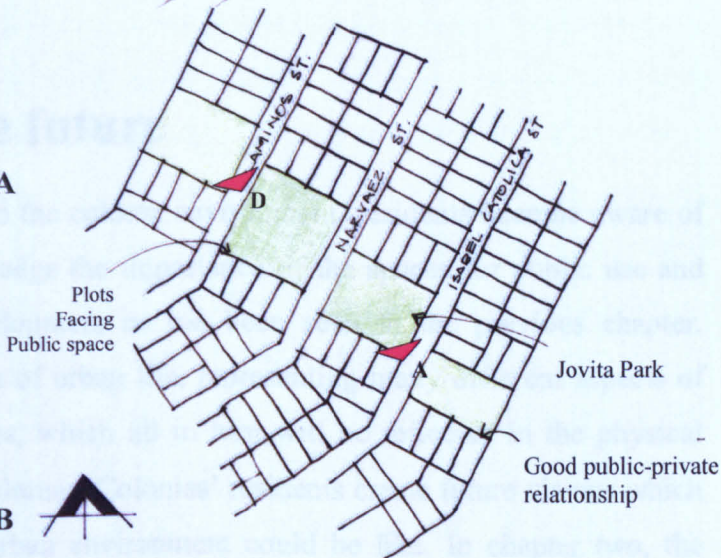
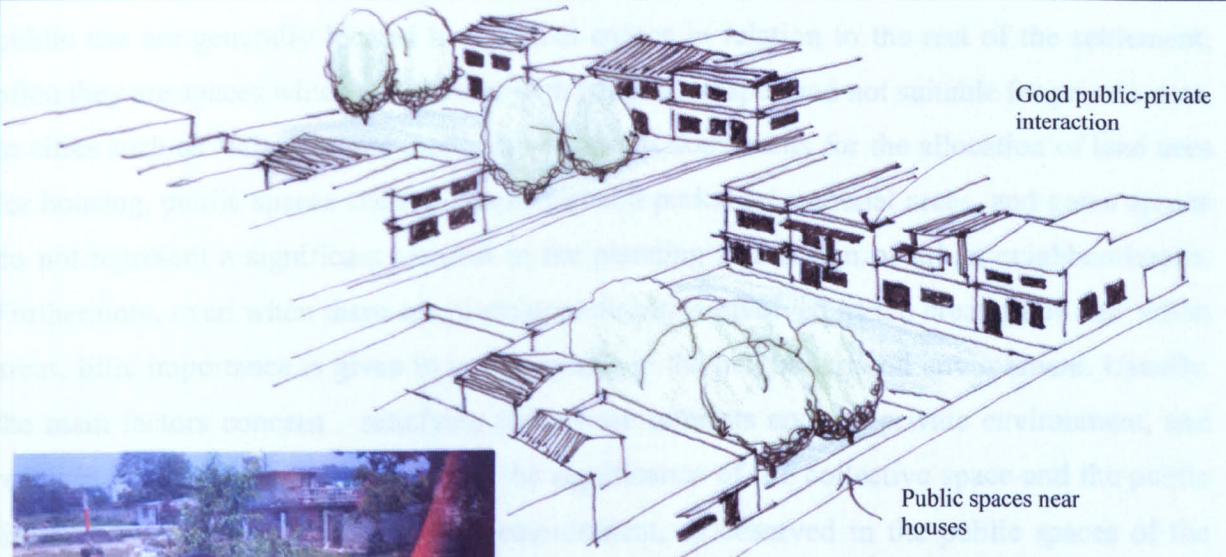
Most of the space is therefore surrounded by blank walls and only few windows. In general, it can be seen that there is very little public-private interaction between the space and most of the buildings. This means that many residents living around have very little interaction with the space. In this way this space has easily become the space of antisocial behaviour (Figure 6.6). As Carmona (2003:174) argues *“Blank frontages not only deaden part of the street, they also break the continuity of experience that is vital for the rest of it. The public edge of buildings should also house activities that benefit from interaction with the public realm and contribute with the public realm and contribute to vitality there”*. In colonia Constituyentes, the public edge of buildings do not contribute to the vitality of the public space, on the contrary the blank walls of buildings deaden the life of the public space as Carmona argues.

e) Colonia Revolucion: Central Public Spaces

The public spaces of colonia Revolucion are a different case from the previous colonias. In this colonia, the public spaces were allocated giving them more importance and therefore acknowledging their significance in the neighbourhood environment. The donation areas were located in the central area of the colonia, *“where most of the inhabitants of the colonia could walk to and enjoy a green area, or a neighbourhood park”*. This was stated by the engineer who carried the land subdivision and designed the plot layout of the colonia (Figure 6.7). The allocation is similar to the spaces in Colonia Constituyentes; however, in colonia Revolucion the plots have their frontage towards the public space, which enhances the life of the spaces as it encourages more people-public space interaction on daily basis. As the engineer stated in the interview, even though there was a huge demand for the land for housing, he tried to leave public areas in the colonia in well located and reachable locations. This meant that the developers gave up land suitable for private use. It is evident in the layout of the colonia that there were generous intentions for allocating public space. Jovita Park and Solidaridad Park which were mentioned in the previous chapter are located in this area.

It is important to remark that there is a common attitude towards areas donated for communal and public uses. This is true in most land subdivisions for housing purposes, not only for colonias populares but also for higher income groups. The donated spaces meant for public and communal services are very frequently allocated in residual areas that are not attractive to anyone. One exception of this may be where there is remarkable natural beauty in the landscape; the land subdivision may respect this feature, and take into account this natural element due to its beauty or ecological significance.

Colonia Revolucion: Central Public Spaces



However in most cases these elements unfortunately do not exist and donation areas for public use are generally located in marginal spaces in relation to the rest of the settlement; often they are spaces which are leftover with irregular shapes and not suitable for private uses. In cities such as Xalapa where topography imposes constraints for the allocation of land uses for housing, public spaces such as neighbourhood parks, recreational areas, and green spaces do not represent a significant element in the planning and design of urban neighbourhoods. Furthermore, even when there are planning authorities involved in the creation of new urban areas, little importance is given to public spaces in the neighbourhood environment. Usually, the main factors concern satisfying the private interests and the private environment, and result in neglecting and marginalizing the significance of the collective space and the public life in the development of the urban environment, as observed in the public spaces of the colonias of this study.

6.3 Public Visions: The future

Once these areas have been allocated in the colonia environment, residents become aware of the existence of these spaces, acknowledge the importance of the spaces for public use and mobilize themselves to promote development as has been seen in the previous chapter. Residents have projects and aspirations of urban life, representing many different aspects of the residents' culture, ideals, and hopes, which all in turn will be reflected in the physical manifestations of public space of the colonias. Colonias' residents create future visions which are representations about what their urban environment could be like. In chapter two, the phrase 'urban imaginaries' was introduced (Soja 2000, Fuentes Gomez, 2000, Silva 2003). It was discussed that 'urban imaginaries' refer to the images that inhabitants of a territory create about the spaces they live in, how they perceive them, and what they mean to them. 'Urban imaginaries' is a phrase that well describes social differences, fears, desires, and aspirations of how the space and the urban life should be. 'Urban imaginaries' are formed by individual images, which together form the 'collective imaginary'. This argument relates to the theories developed by Lynch. From an urban morphological perspective Lynch (1960) tells us that there is a 'public image of cities' and this is made up of many individual ones. Each individual image is unique, and they are all necessary if an individual is to operate successfully with his environment and cooperate with his fellows. The following paragraphs of this section will examine the 'urban imaginaries' of the residents of colonias populares in relation to their public spaces. The residents' images, dreams, aspirations and projects for the development of public spaces will be discussed. And these will be called 'urban imaginaries'.

Generally, urban studies in this matter have focused on the city inhabitants who create representations and images of their experience as users of the space. However, inhabitants of colonias populares are not only users of the urban environment creating perceptions about the space as it exist, even more, so they are also producers of the space. Residents are closely involved in the improvement and development of the neighbourhood environment and create images and represent their own view of the world upon the spaces. They visualize future form, shape, physical features, characteristics, and life for the public environment. Inhabitants of the colonias like urban designers and planners have ideas about how cities should look, function and be lived in, and they also look to translate them into plans and built environments. In this way they describe desires, projects and goals for public space improvements. It is on these future images and ideas that residents develop, from which the materialization, character and morphological characteristics of the spaces comes from. It is our purpose to explore how residents, foresee the space in a better condition and in a different environment which fulfils their different needs. As has been seen very little importance was given to the allocation of public space by those in charge of the plot subdivision. On the other hand through the identification and interaction of people with these spaces; these areas do become significant. Residents developed an imaginary future for these spaces and endow them with importance and meaning in their lives. Future images of public space are mental constructions which in turn will become design concepts and ideas. Colonias residents may not only build these ideas in their minds as an imaginary but they are likely to convert them into physical manifestations, if they can overcome the different stages of the development process. How are public spaces thought about by colonias populares residents? What are the aspirations that residents have for the future? In the following section we will explore the most relevant urban imaginaries constructed by the residents promoting development of the public spaces in the colonias of Xalapa.

6.3.1 Multi-functional space

The idea of having a multifunctional space where users of the space can develop many different activities is present in the aspirations of the colonias residents. The provision of space where people can carry out different activities is an important goal in the inhabitants' public space project. The public space of popular environments is characterized by the development of many different activities granting the space the quality of multi-functionality. This is what residents would like to see happen in their space. Riano (Riaño 1990; Riaño

1998) in her research on popular settlements in Colombia and Ecuador states that the public space of popular inhabitants is characterized by multiple activities in the public space and the multiplicity of urban functions in the popular habitat. In Latin America, multi-functionality of spatial use in popular urban environments is always evident. A diversity of social, economic, and recreational activities take place in the public space in colonias populares in contrast to higher-income where many of these take place in the private environment and where public space is used only as a space for movement. This characteristic of multifunctionality is expressed by the residents of colonias populares in the different images that they have about the space they would like to see built in their public space. They visualise flexible spaces, able to satisfy different uses and activities at different times, and seasons, and for different interests and needs. This is expressed by Señor Fernando of Colonia Constituyentes, who is the main promoter of the improvement of Constituyentes' public space. They desire to see a multiuse court in his immediate public space, imagining the space not only as a place for playing sports, but also a place of social gathering, for celebrations, and for residents' parties. Fernando argues:

"We have the idea of building up a multiple use court, over there in that flat area. Afterwards, if we can roof it; it would be a great place, because it would be a court as well as a hall. It would serve the community for many different activities, to play in as well as for celebrations and social meetings".

Señora Tony of Colonia Los Pinos also imagines her immediate public space as a multi-functional one. Apart from providing a space for play activities with the construction of a playground, Tony and other residents envisage their public space as a place for community meetings, parties, celebrations, and educational activities. In order to provide space for the development of these activities within their public space, they are also visualizing a roofed place which would satisfy their needs. Señora Tony affirms:

"We have been thinking about a roofed space over there, like a shelter for multiple uses, it would help the passers by as a shelter when raining, as well for our parties, meetings and for the children to take their painting courses".

6.3.2 Spaces for all

Colonias' residents share a common territory, history and similar challenges in their urban consolidation; however they are made up of a diversity of individuals, which creates a heterogeneous group with different interests and needs. Another public space issue is about the range of users of their public space. Residents envisage in their space, the cohabitation of

different people, of different ages and genders and interests. This suggests the need of spaces of inclusion, where the diversity of colonias' inhabitants comes together in a common space. Providing a space which satisfies all the different groups of the colonia is an important issue for the public space plans, projects, and dreams of the residents. Señor Luis who is another promoter of the park in Colonia Constituyentes, who together with the other promoters planned the space as a space for all, said:

"In general, our idea is that we have a centre where the three ages can go and enjoy: young people, adults as well as older people. For example, the elderly would enjoy the space taking care of the plants, walking and sitting under a tree, and they would be pleased there. The youngest children would be happy in their playground, the older ones, the teenagers and adults would have a court and a racetrack, which we are thinking about building along the perimeter of the area, for running and sport activities. The racetrack is very important for everybody; tell me who does not want in the morning to do jogging or walking? This is not only going to benefit me, it is going to benefit everybody!"

Residents in Colonia Revolucion when creating Jovita Park thought about similar ideas to those planned by Constituyentes' residents. Jovita Park is in the middle of two other spaces also allocated for public use. Jovita Park was the first to be developed in an attempt to fulfil the needs of different groups in a very small area; Spaces for the youngest, for older children, and their parents were created. However, this is a very small space and residents wanted to provide spaces for a wider range of users including teenagers and adults. The idea of including the different groups of the community was developed by taking into account the three spaces which together serve to different groups of the community. In this way, Jovita Park is for the youngest, and the two others are respectively for the youth and for adults and the elderly. This public space aspiration is described by Señor Angel, who lives in front of Jovita Park, and together with Señora Jovita highly contributes to the improvement of their immediate public space in the colonia:

"In here, in this area, we thought about having a playground for the youngest children. This other space is for older children and this other area here with benches is for seating for their parents. Over there (in the area in front of Jovita Park), the space was thought for the youth for those that play football and basket ball and the other space on the other side was thought as a space for adults for walking, sitting even for reading a book..."

In contrast to the idea of the public space of colonia Constituyentes and Jovita Park, the main promoter of Villahermosa Park in Colonia Ferrocarrilera took a different approach. Señor Artemio thought about the public space of the colonia as a space for play and enjoyment. He

thought and imagine the open space as a playground where children and adults could play together, and where all ages could enjoy the space through play without any restriction. Señor Artemio and the group of residents promoting the development of Villahermosa's communal area observed that most playgrounds in most parks of the city are only for little children but not for the adults. So they wanted to create spaces where adults could play on the swings, on the slides and so on. Therefore the idea of gathering everybody from the oldest to the youngest through play was the main aspiration for the future materialization of their space. Señor Artemio said:

"Our perspective was to have a park where all could enjoy, because there is no park in the city which favours the adults, where not only children can swing but also their parents, where parents be able to play in the slides, play in the carrousel, ride the swinging horses, play, and enjoy together with their children".

6.3.3 Envisaging beauty and function

Another interesting aspect is about making the most of the physical qualities of the spaces available. As mentioned earlier, in most cases areas for public spaces are located in residual areas within the neighbourhood and do not have any significant natural features; On the contrary most of the times spaces allocated for public uses are affected by floods, have often been deforested, or even contaminated. However when natural features exist in the spaces, they represent natural beauty and ecological importance for the residents of the colonias. These become part of the visions and ideas for public spaces which residents construct for the improvement and transformation of the public space. When these natural elements exist, residents visualised their public place with interventions which make use of the significant elements of the site.

The idea of having a public space where users could find physical features which provide satisfaction, relaxation and natural beauty is described by the residents of Colonia Constituyentes. The space in this colonia has natural features which are important for the residents. They wanted to keep them, and embellish the space to make the most of them in the development of their public place. As mentioned earlier the space of Constituyentes has a dip with a group of trees growing up a little grove (Figure 6.6). For the main promoters of the park, this area represents a significant space which they can take advantage of to create a beautiful space. One described it as *"like in the movies"*. Their ideas for this hollow are interesting and well elaborated. They have certainly spent time thinking about attractive ideas

for the future. Firstly, they have the idea of building terraces at different levels going down through the dip where people can walk. These terraces would also have benches. They would like to have two wooden hanging bridges crossing the dip, *“where people can walk across the bridges and enjoy the nature while sitting and breathing fresh air”*. In this way people will be seating on the benches of the terraces looking at the bridges which will have light underneath. Señor Ernesto describes some other aspirations:

“We think about covering the dip with stones to make a natural cascade going down through the stones, and then imagine all this space with flowers, ornamental planting, and the whole space lit with the light of the bridges, this will be incredible”.

Moreover, this space is located in a very rocky terrain and a feature which stands out in the space is a big rock which is the highest point of the space and one of the highest around the area (Figure 6.6). This is another natural feature which the residents want to keep as a natural element to create a viewing point. Residents imagine the rocks with climbing plants, which would take advantage of the form of the rock. They have also thought about using the rocks as natural slides from the top of the viewing point. In addition the whole space will be surrounded by a grove formed by the trees they have already planted. This is the way residents of Constituyentes describe their space, *“it will be something very, very nice”*. They have constructed well designed public space images about the future of the space, informing us about their high aspirations for the improvement of the space. In spite of the scarcity of resources to carry out public space transformation, residents do not limit themselves to plan and imagine the future of the space. They are convinced enough that these aspirations will materialize through their efforts and continuous work.

6.3.4 Satisfying community needs

“We want to put a day care centre over there in that part, to give it a better use, with something that helps and belongs to everybody” (Señor Marcos of Colonia Revolucion).

Many projects and ideas come to residents' minds, through these they look for solutions to the main problems that affect the social daily life of the community. One of these problems is when parents leave the colonias for long periods to go to work, and leave their children at home and alone. This is a major worry in the minds of colonias residents, and therefore for some of the public spaces residents think about including a day care centre. This could contribute to satisfying the needs of these parents. Colonia Revolucion in the park located in J. M. Iglesias Street already has a playground and a sport court, and residents want the rest of

the space to be used for a day care centre to the benefit of families in the colonia. In this way the open vacant space is not only seen as a park, playground, or sport area; or as a space for socialisation, playing, enjoyment and relaxation; the space is also seen as a space where some other community needs can be satisfied. Public spaces are imagined with other supportive facilities that could contribute to the community development of the colonia, complementing the public space with activities that contribute to the life and use of the space. As seen in the previous chapter, in the case of Colonia Tres de Mayo, in addition to a park and a football court the majority of the community requested a day care centre and a library.

6.3.5 Visualizing landmarks and elements of identity

Another relevant issue within the images that residents create for the future of their spaces is that about introducing elements that say something about their place, about the residents' and colonias' history, or culture and traditions. There are interventions which can serve as point of reference or elements of identity within the colonia urban environment as residents describe it. Colonias' residents feel the lack of elements in the colonia which give character to their public space, therefore they visualize for their environment forms that endow the colonia environs with elements of identity and distinction. They feel the need of having clues of identity and landmarks (Lynch 1960) present everywhere in the urban environment which help the urban inhabitant to find meaningful objects on which the urban experience relies. Urban elements that 'can be used as powerful means of extending the citizen's intellectual and emotional reach, helping him to understand his physical and social environment, and how it relates to him' (Lynch, 1990:407) . Residents of Paseos de Xalapa Street of Colonia Revolucion tell us:

"We now want to improve the green area on the other side, we want to build an obelisk, and we think that we need something to identify ourselves. Besides it would help us as a point of reference for visitors in the colonia" (Señora Mercedes).

The urban environment of Paseos de Xalapa Street has been greatly improved in the last three years. Very recently, residents were successful in an improvement application; therefore they got their pavements built by the municipality in 2002. Within this context residents of the street are encouraged to improve the abandoned public areas located on their street. Residents have discussed these spaces and have come up with ideas and images for their street environment. As mentioned above, some residents feel the need of a point of identification in the colonia by building an obelisk, however some others have in mind the same obelisk, but

want to attribute a different meaning, they not only think of as a point of reference, but also see it as a space for memory and history. As another resident states that they would like it to be:

“A place of memory for the heroes who participated in the Mexican Revolution, because that it is the name of our colonia “Revolucion Mexicana” and in the whole colonia there is no place to pay tribute to them” (Señor Humberto)

Residents of Paseo de Xalapa think that it is necessary to build an obelisk of four faces upon which could be written the name of the Mexican revolutionary heroes (e.g. Madero, Zapata, Villa). Furthermore, it would also be built a base on which the Mexican flag could be placed to celebrate the day of the flag. The residents envisage celebrating the Mexican Revolution on November the 20th with a civic ceremony. Residents visualize their space as an area suitable for their ideas, and somehow these planned interventions would enhance the view of the environs of the street, and at the same time give a distinctive character to the colonia, as expressed by the residents.

Physical interventions in the colonia environment reminding residents of the history of the colonia, and especially about the history of its physical improvement and transformation, are another interesting aspect. Elements in the colonias' urban environment which represent meaningful memories remind those who were involved about the difficult path they went through to achieve the physical consolidation of the colonia. In Heriberto Jara Street of Colonia Constituyentes, residents and especially the main promoter of its improvement, Señora Lilia, always remembered the politician (Heberto Castillo⁵) who helped the colonia to pave the main street around eight years ago. It was not until 2 years ago that the residents achieved their dream of setting up a little memorial to this politician in gratitude for his help. Señora Lilia dreamt for a long time about a little wall with a metallic plate with the name of the politician and a little phrase thanking him for the help received. However, when she shared the idea with the local authorities and other politicians, it was welcomed and they contributed with a bust and a base, finally setting up a monument on the street of the colonia (Figure 6.8). In this case, that image of a memory representing the help for improvement materialized and eventually was created in the coloniascape, building a landmark and element of identity. In this way, as Rapoport (1994:221) argues 'landscapes, buildings and other environmental elements communicate identity through the values and images embodied in them'. Urban environments embody different meanings according to different ideals and

⁵ Heberto Castillo famous left wing politician of PRD(Democratic Revolution Party)

aspirations; moreover these urban environments communicate different meanings to those who produce them.

Another element imagined for little green areas, mainly for little spaces, and located on street corners are little shrines. In residents' improvement projects, their religious identity is also imagined as a physical element in the consolidated public space of the colonia. This element is not really about the colonias' name, consolidation or residents national identity, it is more about residents' religious beliefs and traditions. Residents desire little shrines on small green areas, such as the case of residents living around small open areas located in Paseos de Xalapa Street as well as in Carlos Segundo Street, both in Colonia Revolucion. In these cases residents expressed their desire for having a "*Capillita*" (little shrine) in their public space. "*We want to build a 'Capillita' over there in that area, for Guadalupe Virgin, where we can all celebrate it together*" (Señora Martha of Paseos de Xalapa, Colonia Revolucion). Shrines are also elements that residents visualise in their public space to reinforce their identity in the colonia environment.



Figure 6.8 Elements of identity. The first photograph shows the memorial located in colonia Constituyentes. It is an element of memory representing the help for improvement. The second photograph shows a shrine built by the residents living around. This shows their religiosity.

Colonias resident seek to create spaces of identity in their public spaces through different images that involve meanings and memories. They seek to create spaces of significance which enhance the ordinary scenery of the colonia. Moreover, they seek to transform the urban landscape into a home environment with which they communicate, and identify with. Vidler (1992:176) argues that they seek to create a '*city which might be recognised as 'home', as something not foreign, and as, constituting a (more or less) moral and protected environment for actual daily life*'.

6.3.6 Imagining the street

In the improvement of the streets residents also create future images before promoting development, improvement and transformation. The shape of the street is also visualised according to what residents think is best for their needs and the future of the colonia. In Zumarraga Street in Colonia Revolucion, residents imagined their street as a very wide street where cars could circulate freely without traffic problems, and where cars could park on both sides. I believe this image comes from the daily traffic problems that Xalapa suffers everywhere in the city. According to the residents this street is a very important street in the colonia when it is raining and other streets get flooded. Furthermore, they argued that in the future, *“there would be more cars on the streets, because every body wants to have car”*. In this way residents developed thoughts and ideas about how the street could look and also thought about some interesting design solutions:

“At the entrances of our street we think about setting up two big garden pots with nice flowers and plants in order to allow only small cars to enter in our street, because we think about having a very wide street but we also have to prevent cars passing by at high speeds.”

We have already discussed the plans for Paseos de Xalapa Street, where residents want to have landmarks and elements of identity. Moreover, residents have also visualised the shape of their street. They also have in mind a very wide street. They also said that their street is an important route in case of floods, traffic jams, and accidents taking place in the surrounding thoroughfares. In these cases their street would help as an alternative route. Residents thought about having their street *“like a boulevard with a central green strip with trees and plants, where the street could look like a promenade with two lanes on each side and trees all along the street”*. In this case residents really imagined their street *“like a great avenue”* as some residents described it.

All these different examples tell us about the significant aspects of how residents of colonias populares think, imagine, and plan their public space. They produce mental images, *urban imaginaries* through which residents express their ideas, thoughts, and aspirations for their future public space. Kellett (2003) states in his studies about popular settlements, that *“the future dimension is crucial. The long-term nature of the process demonstrates that dwellers are not present-time focused... they adopt forward looking strategies based on optimism and aspiration”*. Many of these aspirations may not be built, as some of these images go beyond

the control of what residents can achieve by themselves with their own resources. Furthermore, they create images of the future of the urban space, where not only inhabitants intervene in the production but also other agents, which are mainly the municipality. Some of these aspirations are very difficult to materialise however if public space imaginaries are not developed as thought of, the residents at least, to some extent they will influence the design and decision making processes in the development of their public space.

6.3.7 Where do visions come from?

Just as the professional designer goes about during the design process looking for precedents and similar interventions in other contexts to find design ideas and concepts that can enrich the design of a new setting, a new place, or a new project; those promoting change and transformation of public spaces in colonias populares also go about their experiences of life, knowledge and resources looking for inspiration and design solutions for the construction of their public spaces. This is most evident in those first physical interventions of improvement launched by residents themselves. Residents find precedents from examples in their surrounding spaces, either locally or externally, from the nearest environment such as other streets and parks within the colonia and the city, and to more external ones such as a foreign country. For example Señor Gabriel of Colonia Revolucion who lives in front of Jovita's public spaces would like to set up more benches in the park, and he has seen some other benches that residents have set up in the football court of the same colonia. (Figure 6.9 (1)) Señor Manuel of Zumarraga Street saw how the pavements were built in a street in the city centre of Xalapa which has similar topographical conditions to his area. This allowed him to find solutions for the way in which the pavements could be built in his street. Moreover, Señor Pedro of Colonia Revolucion also found inspiration from some garden pots in the city centre and used this idea to build his garden pots outside on his pavement:

“Well, I was walking and looking at the streets in the city centre, and there in front of the State Theatre I found a garden pot which I liked, and I told the builder to do something similar, although we changed it, we put it higher and with a border” (Figure 6.9(2)).

Residents find inspiration for the future by looking at public spaces far away from the colonia setting, such as Jovita of Colonia Revolucion who was always inspired by the parks she used to watch on TV. Señor Artemio of Villahermosa Park got his inspiration from American magazines to build the playground in the park. Furthermore, Señor Joaquin of Paseos de

Xalapa Street, found inspiration for the trees and greenery of his street from examples in the United States, place where he used to live and work as a gardener.



Figure 6.9 Public space inspirations. Designing interventions which are based on ideas taken from some other public spaces within and outside the colonia.

Colonias populares build their visions for public space from their experiences of life. The urban form highly depends on the spatial models learnt from their urban experience. In this way, the different urban patterns serve as sources of inspiration for what the surrounding urban environment could be like. Therefore forms are found resembling the historical city models such as monuments as elements of identity, or the modern spatial models such as those of a wide street where cars can pass through smoothly. They build up future aspirations through public space images, finding design solutions for their public space. Ideas come from many other different contexts, and residents adapt them to their reality, transforming them according to their resources and knowledge. Further, in this process, residents imprint their taste, creativity, and culture. The surrounding urban environment is a source of inspiration to create future representations of public space. Bridge and Watson presents similar ideas:

“Cities are creative, places that encourage the imagination, sites of stimulation. People with different ideas come together in cities and their webs of interconnection and sharing of knowledge and ideas are produced creatively and eventually these ideas have material effects” (Bridge and Watson 2000:7).

6.3.8 Expressing aspirations

Most plans and aspirations are expressed verbally, and that is why in this section, the voices of colonias’ residents have often been included. Residents’ aspirations however can also be

explained with other means of communication such as visual images. These express their public space *imaginaries* not only through words but also through a visual language. This is evident through the drawings shown by colonias' residents about the spaces they want to see materialised. This has already been seen in the banners made by residents when they were defending their colonias (Figure 5.7). In addition, they go further and express their ideas, dreams and aspirations through drawings. Their visions are expressed in visual images, drawn by residents with their own skills, knowledge and creativity, in order to transmit ideas, concepts, meanings and physical characteristics of the spaces they would like in their public realm. This shows the value of a graphic language in order to express their aspirations. In Colonia Constituyentes as described above, residents were engaged in thinking about what they could do with the existing natural characteristics, and this was explained verbally. However in order to explain their ideas and the general project of the whole space, residents elaborated a drawing in which they manifest their aspirations (Figure 6.10). The drawing was made with colour markers on an A1 sheet of white paper in which is represented where the different elements they have imagined could be placed on the space. In this drawing of the open space in Colonia Constituyentes, we can see the residents have thought about a running track surrounding the whole space (in yellow) They have designed pedestrian paths (in red), a court, a playground, and viewing point surrounded by trees creating a woodland. We can also see where pavements would be (in black).

Furthermore, they have located the space for the shrine of Guadalupe Virgin, and even drawn the design details about how the Virgin's shrine is going to look like (Figure 6.11). Different symbols and signs have been used which represent different objects and provide information about what they have imagined in that space, and about the kind of environment and activities they visualize. Residents of Colonia Constituyentes creatively expressed their '*urban imaginaries*' through a drawing inspired by their surrounding environment, dreams and aspirations of urban life. Their '*urban imaginaries*' are about creating spaces for all, constructing multifunctional spaces with beauty, satisfying community needs, and developing landmarks and elements of identity. In figure 6.11, we can also see how these aspirations get materialised. Residents of Constituyentes have started to build the shrine in honour of Guadalupe Virgin according to their drawings.

Symbols:

Forest
 Viewing point
 Pavements
 Running track
 Pedestrian routes
 Drainage hole
 Drainage box
 Playground
 Court for various uses
 Benches for resting

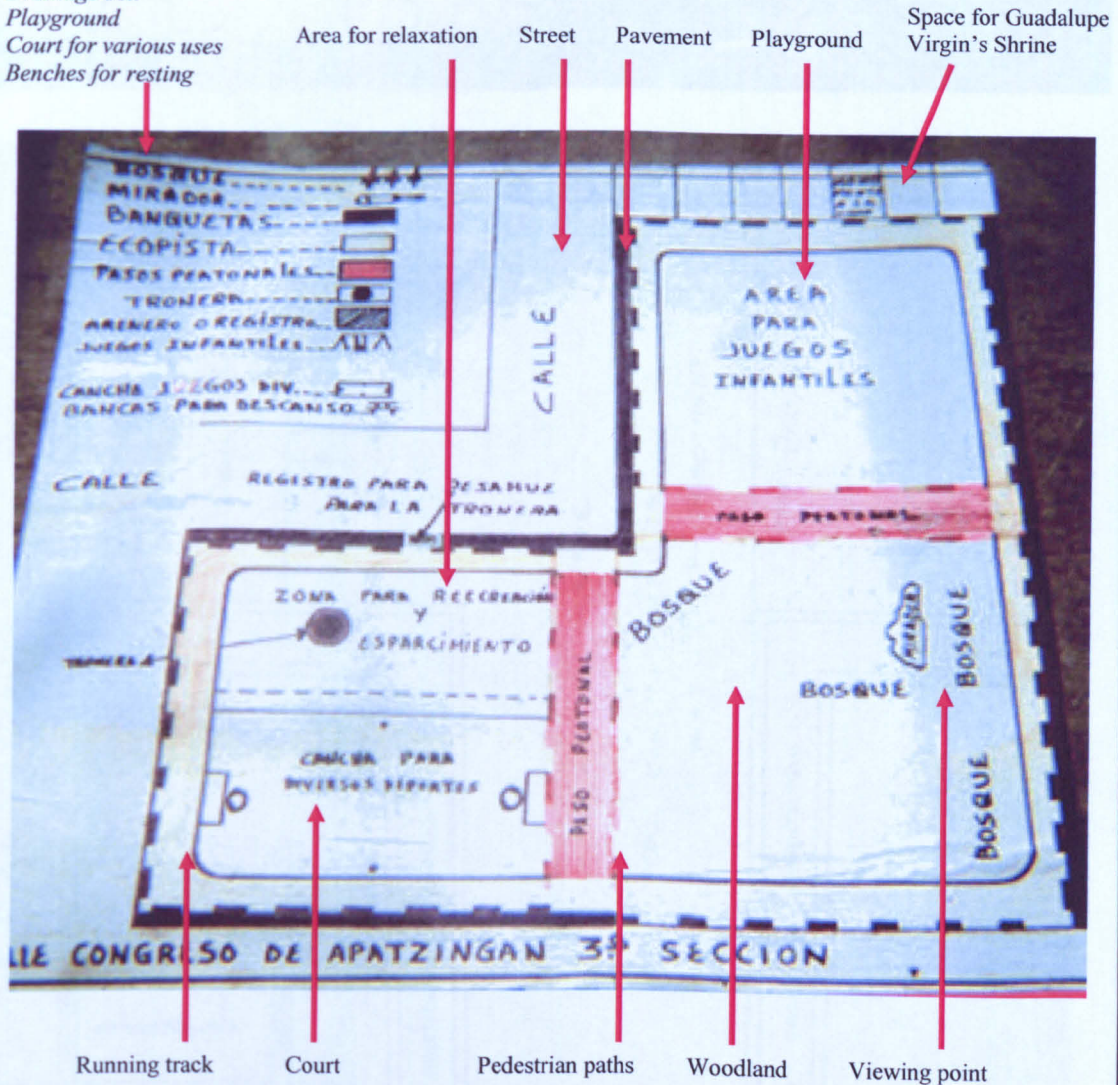


Figure 6.10 Drawing aspirations: The promoters of Colonia Constituyentes Park show their projects and aspirations. They represent the physical features for the future of the park, through a drawing. (Drawing provided by Señor Fernando Vazquez Acosta).

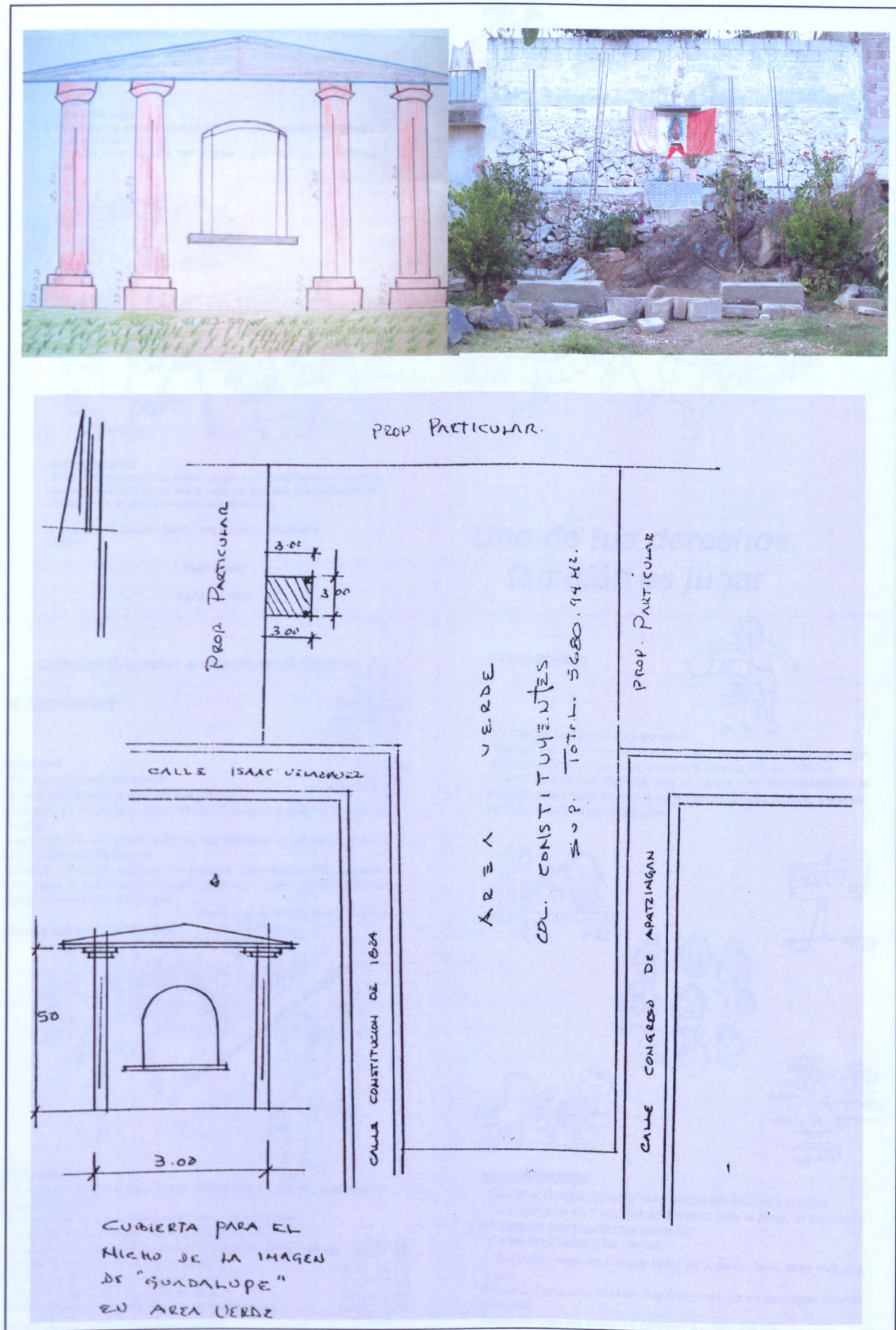


Figure 6.11 The project for the shrine. Drawings done by the residents for the construction of the shrine of Guadalupe Virgin in Colonia Constituyentes. This figure also shows a photograph where the shrine is being built. (Drawings provided by Señor Fernando Vazquez Acosta)

TÚ TAMBIÉN PUEDES COOPERAR PARA QUE EL PARQUE FUNCIONE MEJOR

- Con más juegos.
- Nos falta una toma de energía eléctrica (para reparar los juegos).
- Más alumbrado público.
- Y sobre todo nos falta tiempo para lograr más cosas, hasta para jugar.



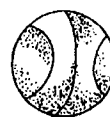
AGRADECEMOS

A todos lo que han cooperado -según su capacidad- para lograr lo que existe en el Parque; sobre todo por que son personas que NO necesitan de un reconocimiento. Lo hacen y ya.

También a TI, que visitaste el Parque y leíste éste folleto. Gracias.

Atentamente

La Comunidad



Uno de tus derechos, también es jugar

Gracias por venir a divertirse al Parque

DE TODO UN POCO

HISTORIA

¿Por qué está el Parque así?

Porque fue como una misa de tres Padres:

Primero. El municipio cercó, hizo canchas, banquetas y sembró árboles.

Segundo. Ciudadanos donaron los mejores materiales para la construcción de los juegos.

Tercero. Herreros -vecinos del Parque- cooperaron con mano de obra para la construcción de los juegos. Y, para satisfacción de todos, hicieron bien su trabajo.

Cada lugar demuestra quién lo habita.

NUNCA FALTA ALGUIEN ASÍ



COSAS MALAS

- El que se enoja porque hacen cosas que no deben, y al que le llamen la atención.
- El adolescente que le falta al respeto a los visitantes.
- La pareja de novios que dan espectáculo gratis.
- El adulto que entra al Parque sólo a tomar su *mullita* o *chela*.
- El que destruye la cerca y los juegos.
- El que tira la basura en cualquier lugar.
- Al que le vale lo que digan los letreros.
- El que siente envidia porque él no hizo las cosas.
- Y el que dice: hubieran hecho otra cosa.



COSAS BUENAS



- El Parque es de todos y para todos.
- No hay restricción de edad para el uso de los juegos, pueden jugar chicos, medianos y grandes; siempre y cuando NO se lastimen.
- Todavía quedan vecinos que sin paga dan mantenimiento al Parque: gastan de su bolsa para herramientas, pintura, escobas, cubetas, cortan el pasto y barren.



NECESITAMOS

- Cuidar el Parque, para que dure mucho tiempo y sea el mejor.
- Traer pelotitas de 1 pulgada de diámetro para el juego en las mesas de tómbola. Los premios los pones tú.
- Cuidar los árboles y las plantas.
- Si quieres tener un Parque como éste cerca de tu casa, haz dos cosas:
Primero. Como una misa de tres Padres en donde participen muchas personas.
Segundo. Con tus acciones demuestra quién vive ahí.

Figure 6.12 The promoters of Villahermosa park of Colonia Ferrocarrilera show their aspirations about the social life and activities they want to see in their space. (Figure provided by Señor Artemio Sanchez)

This other form of communication which residents of colonias populares make use of, engages with the space in a different way of creating representations of the space through visual images. These visual representations are often considered to be particular to professionals as described by Lefebvre (1991) “*conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic sub-dividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent*”. However, representations of the space in colonias populares are not only particular of professionals, but also created by ordinary people which makes them local designers of their own public space, through local knowledge, creative images, and acts of everyday habitation popular residents create urban worlds upon their spaces. As discussed in Chapter two, the theories of everyday urbanism are considered to be very important. Residents of the colonias become everyday urban designers.

In contrast to the graphic expressions of Constituyentes’ residents which reveal more about the physical characteristics of the space, the drawings showed by the promoters of Villahermosa Park depict more about the social environment they expect to see in their public space. The promoters have drawn on a sheet of paper the good things that should be done in the space. They encourage people to play, enjoy and socialize in the space; but they have also drawn the bad things they do not want to see in the space such as littering, alcohol drinking and antisocial behaviour. In this drawing, children are seen playing and doing different activities, different people of different ages are together, and adults are talking and sharing (Figure 6.12).

6.4 Materialising Public Space

6.4.1 Levels of transformation

As mentioned in chapter five, colonias’ residents carry out the first physical interventions in their public spaces, in order to improve, protect and initiate work in their physical development. At the same time, we have seen how within this process, residents build up images about the way these spaces could look in the future. How do these different aspirations of colonias residents get materialised into physical public spaces? In a context of scarce resources, colonias’ residents are supported by external actors who interact with their outdoor environment in order to achieve the aspirations and future goals little by little. Residents, through everyday acts, shape and reshape their urban public space, producing their public setting. Inhabiting the colonias is about producing, constructing and materialising urban life.

DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC SPACE		
STAGES	ACTORS AND ROLES	MATERIALISATION
1. THE NEED FOR PUBLIC SPACE: Identifying needs, problems and threats	INDIVIDUALLY Individuals oppressed by the discomforts and constraints	Limited and/or Temporal Construction of pavements at household level, individual initial interventions on streets and parks.
2. COLLECTIVIZING PERCEPTIONS Motivating and organizing individuals	FROM INDIVIDUAL TO COMMUNITY Self-empowerment, establishing Social networks, alliances- partnerships	Triggering physical development collectively (e.g. first street and neighbourhood parks improvement) Transition from individual to community physical interventions.
3. OBTAINING DEVELOPMENT Community interventions and applications for development	COMMUNITY ONLY Petitioning the local authority for public space improvement	From Temporal to a more permanent consolidation (e.g. Pavements construction, road levelling, parks construction)
4. REACHING PERMANENCE Local authority interventions	FROM COMMUNITY TO MUNICIPALITY Negotiations and professional intervention	Permanent , higher quality, construction of pavements, road paving, and parks fully built. Colonias' residents are not builders anymore. Municipality contractors continue with the improvement.
CONSTRUCTING PUBLIC PLACES		TO "MACRO"

Figure 6.13 Public space development. The table shows the materialization of the public space in relation to the actors participating in the process and the stages of public space production studied in chapter (5). The stages of public space development are characterized by the kind of actors participating in the process and by the kind of physical interventions produced by these actors. This moves from individual to community, and to municipal intervention, from temporal to permanent, and finally from micro interventions to macro interventions.

Different levels of intervention take place within the development of public spaces. If public spaces allocated for recreational purposes do not exist, streets are the prime public spaces of colonias populares. Neighbourhood streets are the public spaces which can never be absent. This is where the public life of the colonias unfolds to the wider public urban environment of the city. It is on streets and on pavements where the wide range of physical interventions of public space production departs from. In this way, physical interventions take place first at the most immediate and "micro" public space (outside the dwelling) usually at pavement level. This is usually an intervention carried out at an individual household level. Departing from the individual pavement, public space materialization extends to a larger scale at street level, with the construction of pavements or street levelling, and these initial interventions are usually the result of a successful collective organization. Furthermore, with the participation

of the municipality the street reaches full consolidation with the permanent construction of pavements as well as the carriageway. The construction and transformation of neighbourhood parks can also take place from a micro to a macro level. From very limited and initial interventions carried out individually, to a more permanent consolidation with participation of the community and the municipality at street level and even at colonia level (Figure 6.13). In the following paragraphs, we will examine how the different public spaces are transformed and materialized according to residents' aspirations; according to their scale from micro to macro, and according to the different internal and external actors' capacities. In this way, the public space of colonias populares reaches different levels of consolidation in the movement towards its definitive permanence and urban integration.

6.4.2 Constructing my pavement:

Many different physical interventions are observed at the micro level. Residents of colonias interact, improve and transform their most immediate public space by building their pavements. Different forms, shapes are observed while walking along the pavements, these disclose the different interventions that residents have carried out individually to improve their immediate public space and satisfy their different needs. At the same time they also imprint their own creative abilities and aesthetic values. The improvement of pavements also represents an ongoing transformation that can also take long periods of construction and consolidation.

There are a variety of reasons that residents have for these interventions. Some of them are environmental and practical reasons such as protecting the inside from the outside, for example protecting the house from the muddy streets and floods. Another reason is to give a good image to the rest of the colonia, for example owners of shops have built their pavements to give a better image to the clients. It is a combination of these objectives such as creating a clean environment, avoiding environmental threats, and also standing out in the colonia, and giving a good image that results in interventions. In this way, residents endow the outside with elements that enhance and embellish their immediate outdoor space, through decorative motifs, such as flower pots and plants, tiles, and metal work, colours, and textures. Somehow, the private is reflected in the outside, and through different interventions the pavement is the extension of the façade. This can be through the use of the same paint and colours in flower pots, in some cases even the tiles of the inside floor of the dwelling are also found in the pavements. Residents extent their control of the space through the physical manifestations on

the pavement which tell the pedestrian, he or she is walking on a space that belongs to the household. (Figure 6.14) In chapter two, the theories of territoriality and appropriation were discussed. This sense of territoriality is also observed in the pavements of the colonias.



Figure 6.14 Interventions on the most immediate public space of the dwelling, on the pavements. It is common to find concrete flower pots on pavements.

In some other cases, it is seen that residents simply build walls over the pavement to protect the dwelling and to avoid floods (Figure 6.14(2)). This is an intervention which protects the whole pavement and the façade of the dwelling, and completely blocks the pedestrian path. It mainly protects the dwelling from floods. People walking on these streets have to get down from the pavement to continue on their way. Pedestrians have different perceptions about this matter; on one hand they argue that both households and pedestrians share rights of the pavement. Pedestrians argue that pavements belong to pedestrians because its purpose is to be the path to walk on and because they use it everyday, therefore their rights as pedestrians are affected. However, on the other hand, it must be recognized that the pavement also belongs to households because they live there and they need to protect their dwellings. Even though streets have been paved and drainage has been set up, the municipal workers have failed to solve the problem of floods in these streets and pedestrians, householders and public space uses are affected. In some other streets where floods are also a threat less drastic interventions are seen, where residents also build walls but only at door entrances and windows.

In contrast, in many other cases of intervention are not only about solving a problem and satisfying the need for protection and security, but are also about satisfying the need of

aesthetics. This involves embellishing their outdoor space by building elements in which residents can imprint creativity and taste. In many pavements concrete and metal raised flower beds have been built. This is an interesting intervention through which residents solve an environmental threat such as protecting the dwelling from floods as well as protecting pedestrians from careless drivers and at the same time satisfy their need of beauty. This is achieved through a creative work in which concrete, metal, colours, and plants are combined. (Figure 6.14 (3))

"We have built our pavement little by little, at first, we did not have anything, later on we built a very small one only at the entrance, then we extended to the whole façade, later on we built our raised flower bed to protect us from the water when raining, but it also decorates our front."

(Household of Colonia Revolucion, Ciudad De Las Flores Street)

"We built our garden pots for aesthetics however we also thought about protecting the pedestrians because cars used to pass very close to our house, so now with the pavement and the garden pots people can walk more safely. The children can play outside too!"

(Household of Ciudad de Las Flores Street, Colonia Revolucion)

The construction of pavements is one of the first interventions in the improvement of the public space in the colonias populares. This intervention, rather than depending on the community, depends on the individual household and its own project of dwelling consolidation. Hence, on streets at the very initial stages of consolidation, it is common to see a discontinuity of pavements. High levels of consolidation, aesthetics and resources, are disclosed in the construction of pavements. Those which are more elaborated stand out in the streetscape in contrast to other dwellings which have no pavements at all. (Figure 6.15)



Figure 6.15 Pavements in the streets of the colonias. Households individually, according to their resources and needs, build their pavements. Some have more impact in the streetscape than others.

As discussed in chapter 4, a common practice within governmental improvement programs of colonias populares in this country was to give construction materials to the residents and make them responsible for building their own pavements. Residents individually or collectively would get materials from the municipality; these in turn would be distributed among the households. In some cases residents would get together and organize to hire construction workers to build the entire pavement along the streets, otherwise each household would build it individually. It is evident that in many cases residents' priorities were not related to the improvement of the outside, priorities were rather focused on the inside, on the private environment. This is a crucial aspect which restricts the development of the outdoor space. If private needs of dwelling, shelter, and basic services have not yet been fulfilled then the outdoor environment is likely to receive little attention. In this scenario, public space interventions are seen as a luxury. Residents first want to satisfy basic needs, as has been seen in the previous chapter in the creation of Solidaridad Park. In the case of the construction of pavements, commonly residents were given materials for the construction of their pavement, yet many of them did not build it. They actually use the materials for the improvement of their dwellings. For example, Santa, who lives in Isabela Catolica Street in colonia Revolucion, was given five sacks of cement for the construction of her pavement. At that time her dwelling did not have any front façade. The dwelling was still under construction, so she used the cement to continue the construction of her dwelling, postponing the pavement construction for the future. She states *"there was no point to build the pavement, it did not have anything on the front (any façade) so I used the cement for some other things in the house"*.

Furthermore, in the colonias there have been fake agents of change, who under the banner of improvement have deceived the rest of the residents and stolen materials to satisfy their own private interests. Therefore in some cases, residents did not even receive their materials. Nowadays, there are areas within the colonias which have already reached high levels of consolidation (street paving, green areas, etc) however, in some dwellings pavements still do not exist. Señora Teresa of Isabela Catolica Street of Colonia Revolucion, tells us about this situation:

"That is the bad thing, not everybody is honest, sometimes the materials got lost, people went to ask for materials, and the ones in charge (the community board) told them that there were no materials left, so people was left without the work, that is why in some parts of the street the pavements are not finished".

6.4.3 Constructing pavements together

In contrast to the individual interventions in the construction of pavements, when alliances are established among neighbours to reach a collective organization, higher levels of physical interventions and consolidation can be achieved. In this way, the development of the street moves from individual to a collective intervention. In the previous chapter, the case of Carlos Segundo Street was mentioned (Figure 5.9) to stress how the achievement of a collective organization leads to the beginning of public space development at a much broader level. Furthermore, the case of Zumarraga Street demonstrates how residents, relying on their resources, knowledge and capabilities, without the help of any governmental agency, managed to reach a strong collective organization, and permanently developed their public space at street level.

In Zumarraga Street residents worked together and built the pavements of the whole street. In this street, some residents had individually built their pavements so the street had the same characteristics as already described, some houses had pavements others did not. Manuel and Vicky, the main agents of change in Zumarraga, encouraged and convinced all their neighbours to build the pavements of the street together. In this way, everyone saved money and formed a money box, which was controlled by Manuel and Vicky. People deposited money on a weekly or fortnightly basis, and at the end of the week, according to the amount of resources; the pavement of one dwelling was built. They bought the construction materials of cement, sand, and gravel. Among the neighbours there was a master mason who provided some cheap labour to help in the construction. He also contributed by lending construction tools and the necessary equipment to make concrete and cast the pavements. Firstly, residents built the necessary infrastructure as the drainage which was yet not built. This was a very hard task due to the very rocky terrain of the area which made the digging and the introduction of pipes a very difficult activity (Figure 6.16 (1 to 3)). Then, they started the construction of pavements, cleaning the sides of the street, preparing the terrain, and levelling the street sides for building the 'guarnicion'. This is a very Mexican term for a concrete made border between the pavement and the carriage way which is built before the pavement itself. (Figure 6.16(4 to 6)) Residents built 35 meters of 'guarnicion' every week. The hired labour and the residents, both men and women participated in the works. As women were not very skilled in construction, they helped the men to carry materials and also contributed with the food and drinks, and tried to ease the hard construction tasks. (Figure 6.16(7 to 9))

Tasks having built the drainage system, the construction of the pavement of the street was done



Figure 6.16 Creating public space: colonias' residents with their own resources, knowledge, and organization. Residents of Zumarraga Street constructed their pavements during weekends from October to December 1994. Men and women worked together in the construction. This box shows the whole construction process from setting the drainage pipes to the finished pavement. (Photographs provided by Señora Vicky Quiroz and Señor Manuel Segundo).

Then, having built the *guarnicion*, the construction of the surface of the pavement was done by casting concrete squares (of 1 sq. m.), one by one, along the street. In this way, every week at least one household would get their pavement finished (Figure 6.17 (9 to 12)) Residents relied on their own knowledge, capabilities and experiences to solve technical aspects by observing other pavements in other streets with similar topographical conditions. Zumarraga's residents started the construction of their pavements in October 1994, they were working on a weekend basis and they managed to build the pavements on both sides of the street in three months. Therefore by the end of the year the pavement of the street was achieved. Zumarraga's residents achieved collective organization, and common goals and aspirations, thereby transforming individually and randomly built pavements into a continuous and permanent pavement. In a context where the municipal authority fails to deliver public space development, the case of Zumarraga is valuable example of what popular inhabitants can achieve at the collective level, through their aspirations, will, collective organization, and residents' empowerment.

6.4.4 Construction of the street with the municipality

Nowadays, physical interventions at the street level for the construction of pavements are rarely carried out by residents at the collective level. In contrast to the case of Zumarraga Street, residents would rather wait to get the street improvements done by the municipality. They acknowledge that it is much better to get the pavements built by the municipality and its contractors. They argue that the quality of the work is much higher, and that the pavements have a better shape and finish than those pavements built by the residents themselves. Furthermore, the presence of more democratic governments at all levels in Mexico, the better management of economical resources, as well as the increase of peoples' demands for more efficient answers to community needs have brought about more improvements carried out by the local authorities in *colonias populares*. This new urban scenario encourages popular inhabitants to get organized and promote development application to the authorities to gain street improvement done by the municipality rather than by themselves. In this process a completely different dynamic takes place in the development of space. Residents do not have the full control any more of the management, construction process or form of the resulting public space. However although residents do not participate directly in the construction process, they still intervene significantly in the construction process, in order to satisfy their needs and fulfil their aspirations. This is the case in Paseos de Xalapa Street, where the

residents gained the development application for building their pavements and the municipality carried out the construction (Figure 6.17).



Figure 6.17 Paseos de Xalapa is a wide street of 20 meters. This is photo before gaining the pavement construction with the municipality. (Photograph provided by Señora Maria Rafaela Ruiz)

Paseos de Xalapa is a very wide street of twenty meters. The residents' project was to have a wide street that some wanted to be like a boulevard with a very wide carriageway as was mentioned earlier. However, when they gained development, the municipality told them that their street would have a single carriageway of seven meters and pavements of six meters wide¹; the idea of having boulevard was not accepted.

Residents asked the local authority to at least widen up the carriageway, arguing that their street was an important route in the colonia and the area. The authorities recognized the suggestion and accepted the residents' proposal. Therefore the pavements were narrowed and the carriageway was widened to twelve meters. This was the very first residents' intervention about the form of the whole street.

In contrast to what happened in Paseos de Xalapa, we have the case of Zumarraga Street in the building of the carriageway². Five years after building their pavements themselves, Zumarraga's residents gained the application for the carriageway paving. They also requested a wide street, arguing about the importance of the route in the colonia, exactly as the residents of Paseos de Xalapa Street did. However, in this case the authorities did not accept the residents' proposal. Zumarraga's residents had already built their pavements leaving a carriageway of eleven meters wide. However, the municipality, in order to reduce costs reduced the carriageway to six meters and then the rest was completed by widening the pavements on both sides and including some street gardens (Figure 6.18).

¹ It is cheaper to build wider pavements because little amount of concrete is used. This avoids high building costs.

² Due to the scale of the intervention and the need of very specialized skills and equipment, the carriageway paving in the streets of colonias populares is always developed by the municipality and its contractors. There are no examples of these improvements done by the residents themselves.



Figure 6.18 The transformation of Zumarraga Street. Photo 1 shows the pavements built by the residents. The following images show the municipal interventions with the construction of the carriageway, reducing it and constructing another pavement next the one constructed by the community. (Photographs provided by Señor Manuel Segundo).

Later on residents of Paseos de Xalapa left their mark by interacting with the municipal construction supervisor, the construction workers and the contractor in order to make sure that the works were carried out according to what they expected in terms of the form of the space. The usual shape of the pavements in wide streets developed by the municipality is the pavement with a strip for trees and plants (Figure 6.21). In narrower streets usually this strip does not exist and if it does, it is very narrow. As Paseos de Xalapa is a very wide street, pavements with strips for greenery were built. This matter provoked the intervention of residents, as some residents did not want a green strip in their pavement and others did. Some wanted it very wide, others wanted it to be very narrow and in some cases the residents themselves eliminated the strip by filling and covering it with concrete. They argued that these *“are just spaces for littering, moreover people do not respect the plants and flowers”*. Some others said that is better not to have gardens in pavements because household do not clean them and do not give any maintenance. On the other hand, some other residents wanted spaces for planting trees, grass, and flowers to embellish the street, and to create a good ambiance and give freshness to the street. The garden strip on pavements is always an issue of discussion which encourages the residents’ intervention in the construction of pavements with the municipality.

Another aspect for residents’ intervention concerns the requests for ramps for car entrances in those areas where the pavement faces a garage (Figure 6.19). Even if dwellings do not have garages, many households request the builders to build a ramp. Residents have a plan for the future form of their dwelling, and for this reason the residents interact in the construction by arguing that they will build a garage in the front part of their dwellings. Residents have also intervened to get the construction of ramps for disabled people on street corners. These are common requests in the construction of pavement streets of colonias populares. Hence,

residents leave their mark in the process and eventually in the physical production of their public space.



Figure 6.19 Pavements with ramps for cars. Residents request ramps on pavements for garage entrances. In some cases residents even ask for a ramp after having built the pavement edge. Residents plan to have garages in the future.

In the streets, where households have individually built their pavements, they try to keep their first pavements. In some cases, the municipality wants to demolish these pavements in order to make an even pavement along the whole street. However demolishing pavements built by residents feels as if the efforts spent in building the pavement are being wasted. Therefore, in many streets the old pavements initially built by the residents are kept. It becomes obvious which pavement was built first by the residents and which pavements were built by the municipality. This gives to the street an interesting look, as it becomes evident what was built first and what built later and who built what. In this micro-space the mark of each actor involved in the physical production of the public space is uncovered (Figure 6.20). In chapter two the theories of transformation of Habraken were introduced. He argues that built form shows the actions and control of the actors involved in its production and transformation processes. These are reflected in the construction of the pavements of the colonias populares. Habraken (1998:28-29) argues:

'Built form reflects the broader field of social interactions within which it occurs. It is the physical properties of the particular forms in play that reveal how agents distribute the control' (over space).



Figure 6.20. The different interventions carried out by different actors are disclosed in the public space. In these examples the pavements built by the residents can be distinguished with the ones built by the municipality .

Public space construction is always influenced by residents interventions, and the form and technical aspects of interventions carried out by the municipality could also be based on what residents have done before, for example work done to avoid environmental threats, such as floods. Residents' first interventions inform the contractors and the municipality about important aspects to be taken into account in the improvement and the construction of pavements, as well as carriageways. In the street of Paseos de Xalapa, some households had built their individual pavements very high to avoid water coming into the house during the heavy rains, in some other cases residents have built walls to protect the house as we saw earlier. All these residents' interventions help professionals to take into account these problems and provide better solutions in the permanent construction of the public space.

Popular residents recognise the quality of the pavements built by the municipality, however their perceptions about these transformations are different from the perception they have when improvements have been done by themselves. When the improvements have been carried out by the residents, such is the construction of pavements of Zumarraga Street; they turn a blind eye to the quality, the defects in the finishing, and any possible mistakes in the design, or form. It is evident that residents are proud of their interventions and efforts. These are regarded as a great success, as a great achievement carried out to overcome difficulties and within tough situations. On the other hand, when interventions have been carried out by the municipality and its contractors, residents become very critical and strict about the quality of the works. In the case of Paseos de Xalapa, the president of the community board, Señor Humberto and some other residents criticized the form and the shape of their pavement and also the finishing. In this street the criticisms are about the shape of the strips for trees and

plants which in some parts of the street are very wide, and in some other parts these are very narrow (Figure 6.21). Furthermore, they have also criticized the bad location of the ramps for disabled people which are located on street corners, in such a way that are not aligned one with another. Further some ramps are very narrow and make it difficult to use them. These are details about which residents are aware, and therefore they complain and demand good quality in the construction. *“We do things and we do not really know how, but they (the contractors and the municipality) are professionals, they must do things properly”...*



Figure 6.21 The pavements built in Paseos de Xalapa showing the typology of pavements built by the municipality. Residents have complained about the design of the strips for plants and the ramps for the disabled.

Through the community boards, a channel for residents' involvement has been opened during the construction process of public space through the 'controller/ vigilant' (Figure 5.11). Moreover, the 'controller' is not only involved in supervising the construction, since residents pay a significant amount of money to get the development done, they are also closely involved in the construction process demanding quality and looking to satisfy their needs. This takes place in an interaction between residents, builders, and supervisors and in some cases even municipal planning officials. This interaction can also become a difficult one when residents do not receive a positive answer to their requests and do not see in the final product their wishes and needs satisfied. On one hand the state and local government, in the search of community participation and transparency in the urban management and governance, have encouraged the involvement of the community in the construction process as supervisors of the quality of the work, while on the other hand, those municipal officials in charge of the process in many cases fail to recognise peoples' demands and complaints. Señor Humberto of Paseos de Xalapa argues about this matter *“It is very important to take into account residents' opinions, eventually we are the users of these transformations, and moreover we are also paying for this”*.

6.4.5 Personalising our street.

The house extends out to the street and the border gets blurred by the personalization of the pavement, when it is made part of the domestic environment. Even though residents do not carry out the construction of the pavements anymore, their intervention after contractors and municipal interventions are finished is a common activity. Once the pavement is finished, residents interact more directly with the space and continue with the physical production of the pavement by arranging gardens, planting flowers, and trees, and setting up flower pots on the strips left on the pavement. In addition, shop owners set up canopies at the front to protect entrances from the rain and sun, and some residents have even built benches on the pavement to sit outside (Figure 6.22).

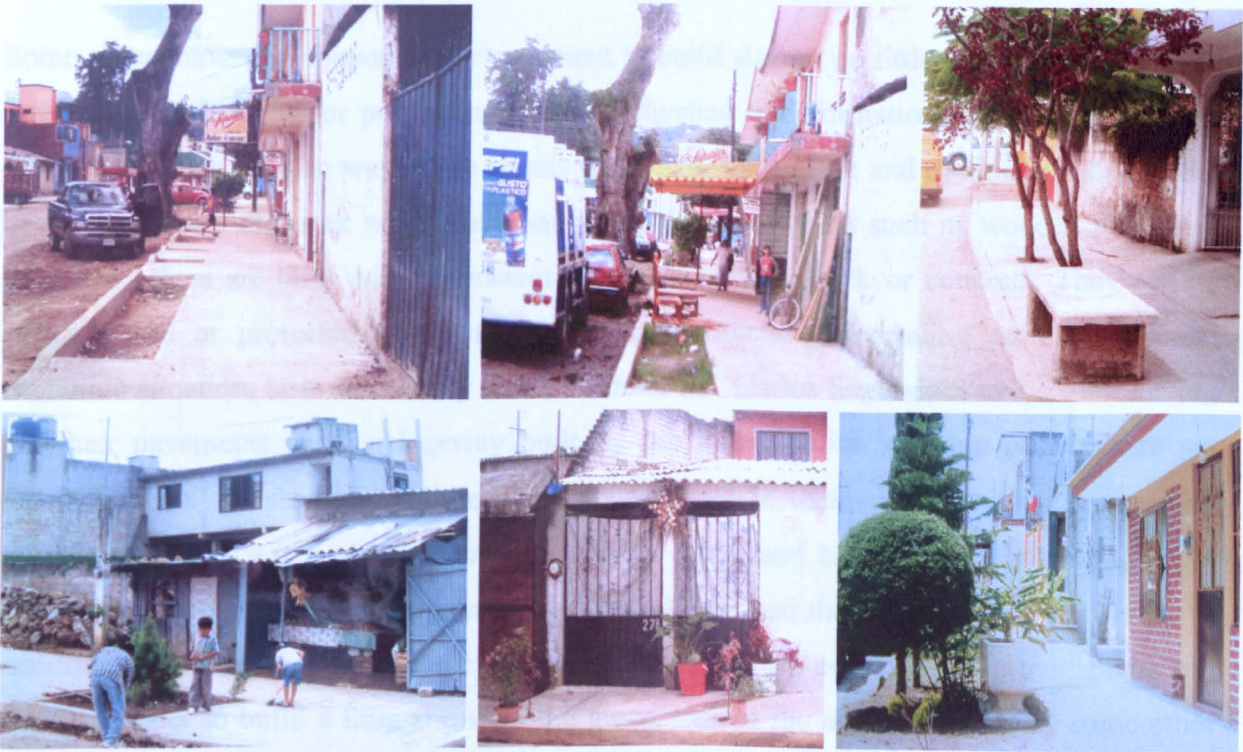


Figure 6.22 Pavement transformation, personalization, and appropriation. Different interventions are carried out by residents after the municipal interventions. Residents decorate, fix their gardens, their front facades look cleaner, and the new street encourage them also to improve the front to their dwelling.

Residents transform their new pavement, personalising it through different elements according to their needs, taste, culture and aspirations. The surface's finishing of the pavement is made of concrete; however residents also interact here and contribute to the finishing of the pavement by asking for certain finishing, and even provide materials such as cobblestones, or tiles to set on the new pavements. Furthermore, some residents have set up shrines to revere the Guadalupe Virgin in their pavements (Figure 6.23).



Figure 6.23 Residents-space interactions and the personalization of the pavement from tiles to shrines.

Some others have gone beyond their pavement to build shrines on little green areas in streets, developing their ideas for public space in the physical transformation by not only wanting accessible routes but also wanting to satisfy their beliefs, culture and traditions. Shrines can be built in many different ways, some are made from materials such as wooden poles and iron, and others are built with permanent materials such as brick or concrete. They can be either closed or protected or open without any protection, depending on the residents' economic situation, taste or security in the colonia. In Carlos Segundo Street, after having got their pavements and carriageway built by the municipality, a group of residents got together to build a shrine in a little green area located in their street. The green area was abandoned and it was a place where male adults drank and bothered residents and people passing by. Señor Jorge and his *compadre*³ (friend) had had the idea of building a shrine “a *capillita*” for a long time. Hence, they gathered economic resources from their neighbours and hired a builder to build a little shrine in the green area of the street. Inspired by some other shrines they built a little room made of masonry with sloping roofs, and with some metallic windows and a door, and they set up a bust of Guadalupe Virgin inside it (Figure 6.24). Through these interventions it is seen that public spaces in the colonias are the spaces for expressing cultural values. Through the residents' direct physical interventions the character of the public space of the colonias is built, residents appropriate the spaces by leaving their mark. This mark is not only about solving primary and basic needs of public space; it is also about building up, promoting and maintaining their identity and culture.

³ It refers to a special friend with whom the relationship is explicitly established for purposes of helping and protecting each other. See (Riaño, 1990). The starting point for the formation of mutual aid in colonias populares is highly based on kinship relationships. See (Lomnitz, 1997)

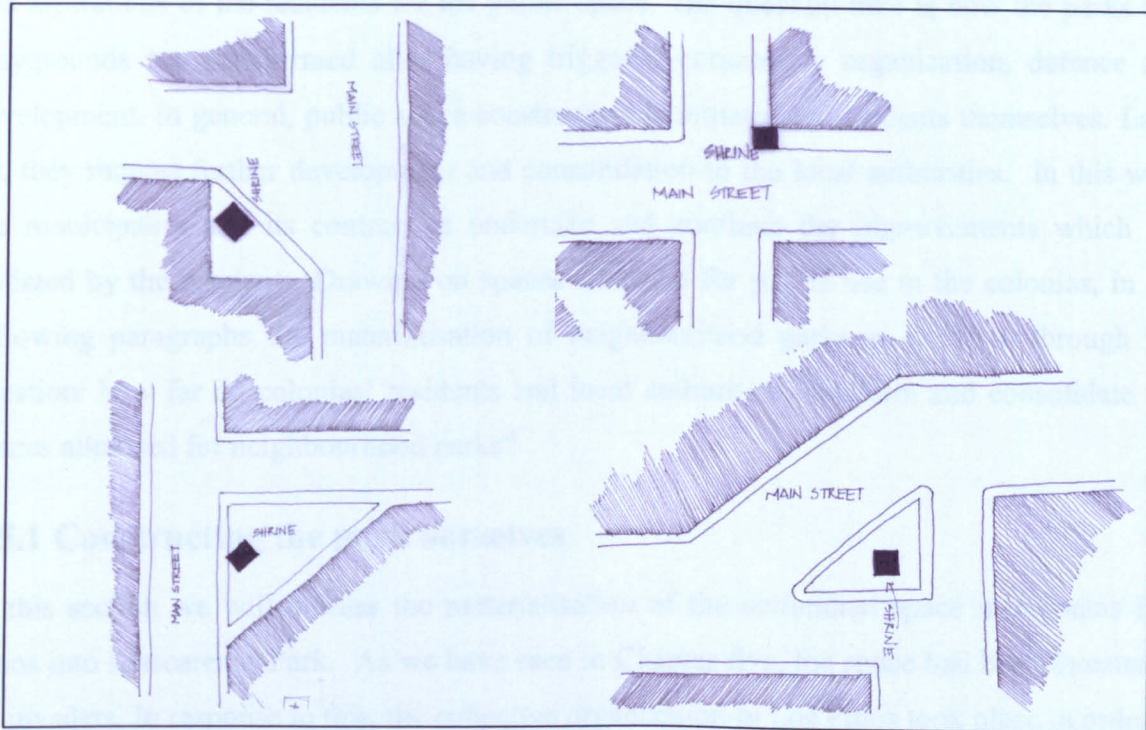


Figure 6. 24 Street shrines. Residents move from their pavements to street corners and little green areas on their streets to build shrines for Guadalupe Virgin. This is a common intervention in the streets of the colonias.

It is interesting to observe how, that apart from setting up shrines in order to tackle antisocial behaviour, shrines are usually set up in spaces of certain importance within the urban space. This means locating shrines on urban nodes where they can be seen by many, especially on street corners or in green areas which are strategically located. In this way, shrines also become landmarks of identity within the urban environment of the colonia. It is interesting to observe that religious beliefs also play an important role in the shaping of the urban environment. In chapter two the theories of culture and appropriation of Rapoport were discussed. Rapoport defines culture as 'as a way of life, as a particular way of doing things,

and as a system of symbols, meanings and cognitive schemata' (Rapoport, 1991). This was observed in the colonias with the construction of shrines.

6.5 Materialising neighbourhood parks

As has been pointed out, the production of public space in the colonias is initiated by residents' physical interventions at all levels in the colonia environment. Interventions in neighbourhood parks start with the defence of the space against threats of invasion. The physical transformation of parks continues, leading to the materialisation of the projects, plans and aspirations of the residents for the public space. The question here is how the parks and playgrounds are transformed after having triggered community organization, defence and development. In general, public space construction is initiated by residents themselves. Later on, they request further development and consolidation to the local authorities. In this way, the municipality and its contractors undertake and continue the improvements which are initiated by the residents. Drawing on spaces allocated for public use in the colonias, in the following paragraphs the materialisation of neighbourhood parks is explored through the question: how far do colonias' residents and local authorities transform and consolidate the spaces allocated for neighbourhood parks?

6.5.1 Constructing the park ourselves

In this section we will discuss the materialisation of the communal space in colonias Los Pinos into Mascarenas Park. As we have seen in Chapter five, the space had been threatened by invaders. In response to this, the collective organization in Los Pinos took place in order to defend the space. At the same time through practices of appropriation, residents had initiated the development of the space. Residents have also created ideas and aspirations upon the space which in turn have influenced its physical development; let us examine how residents constructed their public space.

This communal space is located in the lowest part of a ravine; therefore it was an area of floods and swampy terrain. After various invasions, the space was reduced to an area of 317 sq. meters. Residents started the development of their space by consolidating the ground by filling the terrain with debris from the nearby constructions sites. In doing so, the swampy terrain became a strong and flat terrain which could be used for recreational activities of the colonia. They planted trees and plants in the space and used stones to protect their little

gardens. And they also built steps on a little hill and some paths using wood and stones. Afterwards they continued with the construction of a playground with some wood and trunks which were already in the space. Using old tires and ropes, they also built a bench, two swings, a climbing net and some other pieces of equipment. (Figure 6.25 (1 to 6) and Figure 6.26)

The transformation of the space continued, not only with the participation of the residents of colonia Los Pinos, but also with the participation of an altruist architect (an external agent) who was a friend of one of the residents. The architect offered his help and promised the residents to help them to improve the paths and the stairs that the residents had built up in the past, with permanent materials. So the architect and some construction workers worked for an entire week with the residents and they constructed the path that nowadays crosses the park. The stairs lead to the highest point of the terrain, and two slides are now built with permanent materials such as concrete, red brick, and wood. They have also improved the landscaping with new trees and flowers. Furthermore, the architect, with the help of a blacksmith, another altruistic person, both together made new games for the playground. The architect donated economic resources to this, and the blacksmith worked for free. They built four swings, and a jumping horse. Later on, one of the neighbours who is a carpenter built two wooden benches and a table with a roof so adults can come, sit and watch their children, or they can use it to eat lunch. Nowadays, from time to time, residents hire a gardener to mow the grass. The gardener also contributed to the construction of the space by building a wooden fence in one of the boundaries of the playground area to protect children. The construction continued with the building of a little retaining wall to protect the children from the uneven terrain. This has been extended behind the swings and converted into a bench, as residents felt that the women needed a place to sit to watch the children. In this way parents can look after their children and talk to other adults. (Figure 6.25 (7 to 11) and Figure 6.27)



Figure 6.25 The residents of Colonias Los Pinos constructing their park. Photos 1 to 6 show how residents at colonia level have worked on the materialisation of their little park, rustically constructing it. Photos 7 to 11 show the evolution of interventions towards permanent consolidation. (Photographs provided by Señora Antonieta Menchaca)

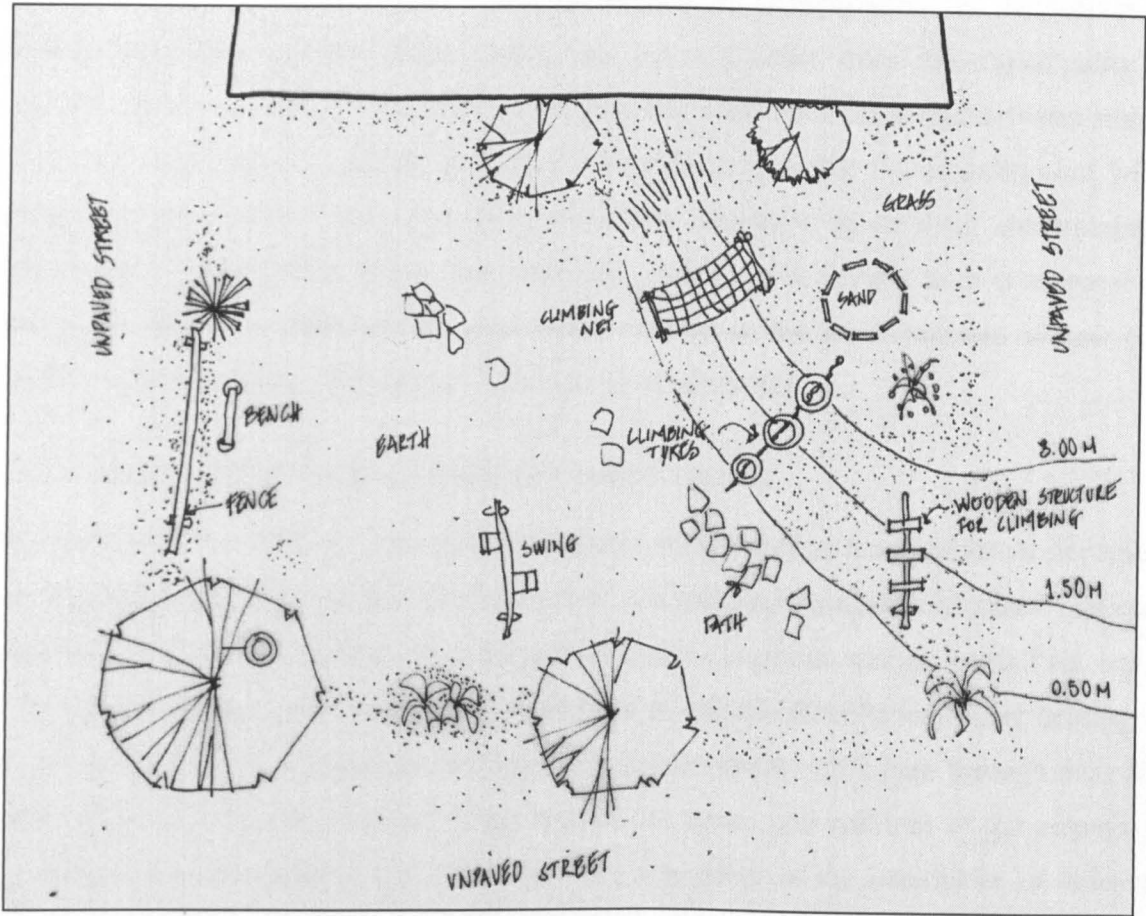


Figure 6.26 Plan of the initial transformations carried out by the residents of colonias Los Pinos: Climbing net, climbing tyres, a bench, fence, swings, new plants, a path with stones.

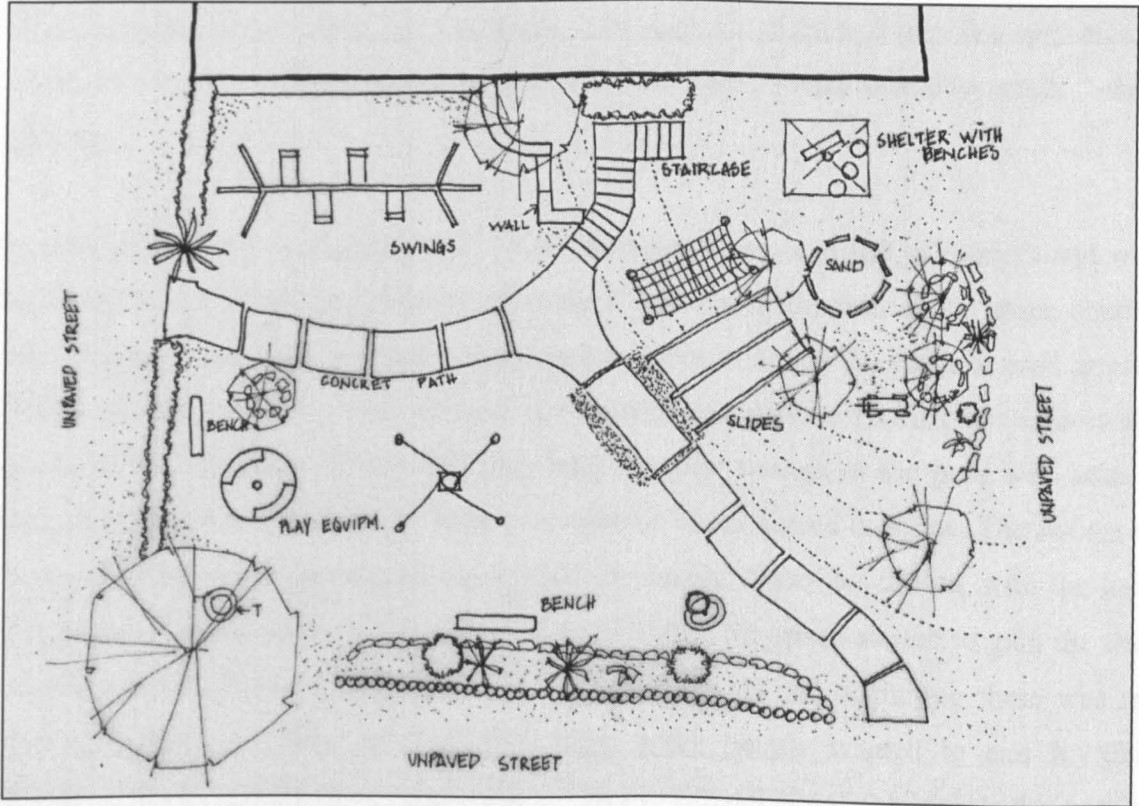


Figure 6.27 Plan of the improvements carried out by the residents of colonias Los Pinos with external help: iron play equipment, a concrete path, staircase of masonry, a shelter, new plants.

Los Pinos' residents have achieved a great degree of consolidation by themselves, and although they have gained external help, this has not come from the municipality. The external help has come from the social networks, and alliances established between residents and friends. Los Pinos' residents have tried to get help from the municipality, but without success. On the contrary, they see the municipality somehow as an actor constraining the permanence of their public space, and who have also tried to invade their communal area. This in turn has motivated them to make greater efforts in the improvements of their public space by working only by themselves with their own resources.

6.5.2 Constructing the park with the municipality

The creation of Jovita Park is scenario with many similarities to the creation of Mascarenas Park. Residents also initiated the development of this park; however the difference in this case is that residents gained municipality help to consolidate the public space. Jovita Park was one of the spaces invaded and continuously threatened in colonia Revolucion. After dealing with the invaders, residents initiated and sustained the development of the park through their direct interventions. Firstly, the residents living around the space, the children of the colonia, and especially a woman called Jovita, who was also a member of the committee of defence of public spaces of the colonia (see chapter 4), undertook the initial activities of development of their communal space. From the beginning, Jovita as a good agent of change, addressed the residents, mainly the children, and told them *"One day this place will turn in a very nice park [...] we are all going to work hard and you all have to help"* Jovita nowadays adds *"they all helped me"*.

The activities started by cleaning the space which was dirty, and full of rubbish and weeds. They levelled the terrain and planted some trees. The transformation of the space continued when they put some white painted stones down in order to define the paths as well as protect the trees and little gardens. They also put out some tyres painted with different colours so the kids could start playing. Afterwards, they built the first swings in the park with some old swings they found, and hung them from two columns of reinforced concrete. The swings were actually built by the children with the help of the adults. Later on, Jovita, with the help of some friends, bought some metallic swings, in this way, the space started to gain the shaped of a playground (Figure 6.28 (1 to 6) and figure 6.29) At the beginning there was much discussion about the name of their new park, some people wanted to call it "Caritas Sonrientes" (smiling little faces) some others "Parque Dia del Niño" (children's day park).



Figure 6.28 The construction of Jovita Park was initiated by the residents and completed by the municipality. Photos 1 to 6 show the interventions launched by the residents. Photos from 7 to 11 show the construction process of Jovita's park with the participation of both residents and the municipality. (Photographs provided by Señora Jovita Rodriguez).

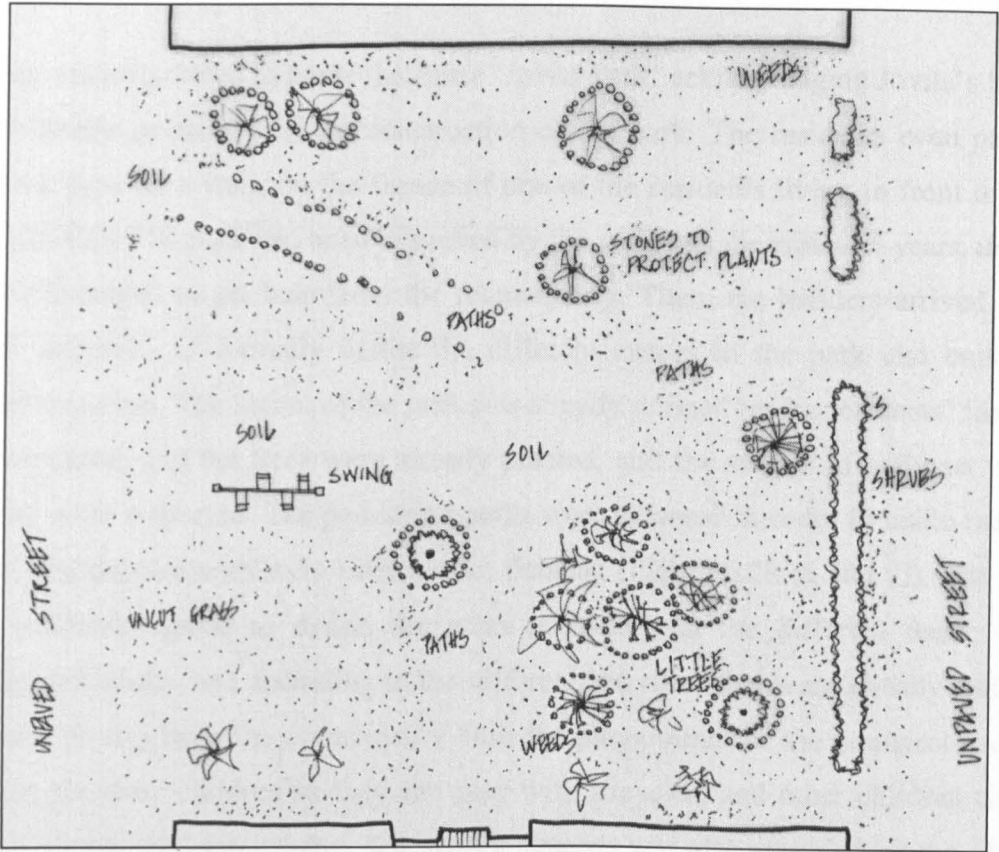


Figure 6.29 Plan of the first interventions carried out by the community to build Jovita Park: Paths, a swing, and new plants and trees.

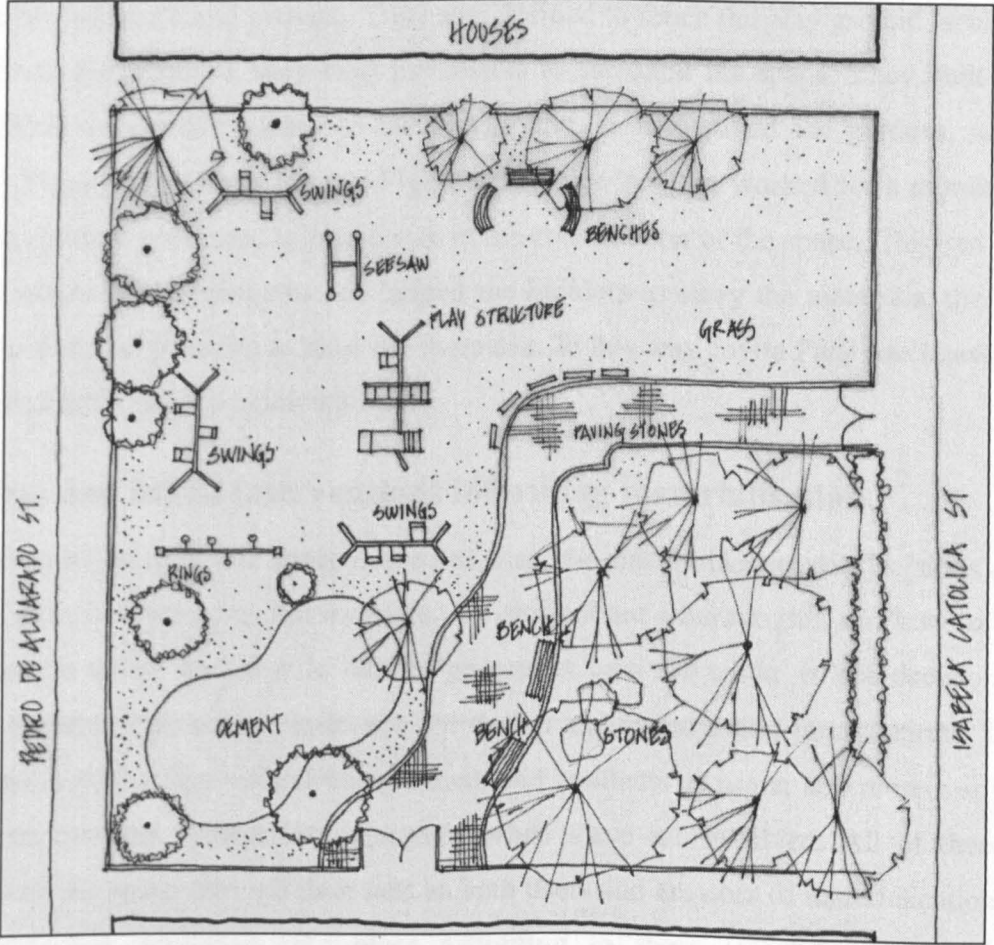


Figure 6.30 Plan of the transformation with the help of the municipality: a new path, new iron equipment, benches, play areas, and new landscaping .

Finally, the majority voted to name the space 'Jovita Park' acknowledging Jovita's hard work and commitment in promoting the construction of the park. The residents even painted the name of the park on a wall, on the façade of one of the residents living in front of the park (Figure 6.28 (6)). The park had been improved by the residents for around 5 years, until 1994, when they managed to get help from the municipality. Then, the builders arrived led, by a municipal architect, to formally define the different spaces in the park and build it with permanent materials. The layout of the park was already defined by the residents' first actions of transformation, and the trees were already planted, and the swings initially set up by the community were respected. The pedestrian paths were changed in order to make the most of the space, and cobblestones were used for the flooring (Figure 6.28 (8 and 9)). The architect and the residents agreed to define the areas according to the different users, children, youngsters and adults, and according to the different activities that were already taking place in the space. In this way, the municipality built the playground for the youngest users and a small court for older children so they can play with tricycles, and other children could also dance, and play group games there. A space for benches was also provided for the adults. The area where residents had created a garden with most of the trees was kept, so people could continue having lunch and picnics. They also decided to fence the play ground area to protect the children. Furthermore, they built pavements to surround the space. They built the inner paths, added some more games to the playground, re-landscaped the gardens, and set up lighting. (Figure 6.28 (10 to 11) and Figure 6.30). The builders worked for a month in Jovita Park, and children continued to participate in the construction of the space. Children helped to build the edges of the footpaths and helped the builders to carry the materials, the sand, the cement, and the cobblestone to pave the footpaths. In this way Jovita Park was constructed by both the residents and the municipality.

6.5.3 Uses and initial interventions informing materialisation

In the construction of public space in the colonias, the stakeholders make decisions about the nature of their interventions. For example, decisions about where to put, and how to build the playground or where and how to build a pedestrian path are made. In the decision making process, different interactions influence the design and construction interventions. There are interactions between residents as transformers and residents as users; and moreover there are interactions between professional designers when these are involved. All of these people interact with the space through their acts as both users and creators of materialisation. Design and construction decisions take place according to these interactions in which each

stakeholder involved in the space informs each other about the way in which interventions should be carried out and the form they should take. In Mascarenas and in Jovita Parks, the different actions of the users informed those building and deciding about the physical construction of the space. In Mascarenas Park, the pedestrian routes were already marked by the daily use of passers-by and these were taken into account to build the pedestrian paths of the parks. The playgrounds and games were located where children liked to play the most. Moreover, residents as builders knew how people moved and used the space, and based on this knowledge, the group constructing the park, took decisions about how the space could be better built in accordance to the uses already taking place. For example, the sitting areas were set up where adults usually gathered. In this way, the uses developed in the space influenced later the decisions made by those involved in the improvement and transformation. Señora Tony of Mascarenas Park comments:

“This is the way things have occurred, everything has been done over the way, if the children are over there, so there, we put the playground, if we see the adults using this space here, we built something here for them, if people walk through a certain route, there we build the path...we have seen how things function and then we propose the different changes within the area!”

Generally, in other contexts and especially in more affluent societies, the form and interventions are decided by professionals and then later on, users adapt their behaviour to the fully built public space. In contrast, public spaces in popular urban environments, and especially those public spaces fully built by inhabitants such as Mascarenas Park, the form and the interventions are adapted to the daily uses and social activities already taking place in the space, which first produced socially and spatially public space. The decisions about the physical construction of the public space are influenced by the uses and activities. Furthermore, in the previous parks the architects involved adapted their interventions to what was previously done by the residents. Hence, the uses and initial transformations already taking place in the spaces inform the professionals about how to continue with the improvements. In the case of streets, initial interventions carried out by residents have also informed professionals in different ways. For example, in areas where residents suffer from environmental threats such as floods, they have built high pavements or even little walls (Figure 6.14). These have also informed professionals participating in the full consolidation about how to build new interventions and provide good solutions to the needs and difficulties impinging on public space. This happened in the construction of pavements in Paseo de Xalapa Street in Colonia Revolucion, where streets and consequently dwellings used to get

flooded. Residents initially constructed very high pavements and this in turn was taken into account when professionals intervened in the permanent consolidation of the street. However, this does not always occur. There have been many cases in which professionals, especially municipal architects and designers have ignored uses, activities, and initial interventions carried out by residents. This attitude may negatively affect the future life of the public space and the residents' perception of the interventions. This reveals about the significance of the participation of each stakeholder, and the importance of good communication, and connections between them. However, municipal agents often fail to recognize and even neglect the community, and often impose their own interests and ideas, as was studied in chapter 4. Residents with their local knowledge, and professionals with technical knowledge and expertise, should always interact in order to create high quality public space. This not only applies to colonias populares, but to any other context. Señora Tony of Mascarenas parks tells us about the help received from the architect: *"the architect has been the translator of our ideas into the physical construction"*. As was seen in chapter two the idea of collaboration in the development process is considered to be very important. The case of Mascarenas is an example of a positive collaborative development.

6.5.4 Materialising parks in larger spaces

The previous spaces are spaces of a small scale (Jovita Park is 1000 sq. meters and Mascarenas is 317 sq. meters), in which resident's interventions have had a great impact in the development of their public space. However, at certain points of the urban consolidation of the colonias, residents cannot continue the improvements by themselves. In the case of streets, the participation of the municipality for the construction of the carriageway is essential, due to the greater scale of the intervention and the requirement of specialized labour and construction machinery. In the case of larger spaces allocated for public recreational use, the same situation takes place. When the spaces are much larger residents cannot manage improvements and development by themselves. Although, they are able to initiate development and improvement with significant interventions, they leave most of the site without any improvement. In colonia Constituyentes, residents have a space of 6000 sq. meters and they have carried out significant changes in the space. Initially, the terrain was very uneven, so they levelled the area and later planted trees. They built the playground with games obtained from the state government and they transformed some big tyres into benches by putting wood on the top. Furthermore, they also built a shrine for Guadalupe Virgin (Figure 6.11). All these transformations represent significant changes in the site; however

they only impacted a little area in this huge terrain, leaving most of the space undeveloped. The residents could not manage the transformation of such a large space by themselves. They have great ideas and aspirations, however to realize them, residents claim that they need the intervention of the local authorities. So up to now they have been lobbying local authorities but without success.

6.5.5 The municipality constructing the park

In order to see great ideas and a great future materialise, residents allocate great efforts to get the support of the municipality. This is seen in the case of Colonias Unidas Park in Colonia Tres de Mayo, where residents spent about three years of continuous lobbying and petitioning to the local authorities in order to see the things they had imagined develop in the space. As in other public spaces of the colonias, the development of the space was initiated by the interventions of the residents, and in this case by the youngsters of the colonia who started to improve the area in order to play football (Figure 6.32). The space has an area of 5000 sq meters and had big problems with floods, littering, and abandonment. The municipality had built a bandstand without consulting the residents so the bandstand was left abandoned for many years (Figure 6.31 (2)). Initially the youngsters carried out cleaning activities, levelled the terrain and equipped the area with goalposts, and lighting. The adults also planted trees and plants. However the residents' interventions had little impact on such a large space and they were unable to sustain the development process by themselves and the space was continuously left abandoned. Therefore, after continuous lobbying, overcoming obstacles, the stakeholders, the community and later the municipality, (as examined in chapter 5), developed the space into Colonias Unidas Park (Figure 6.31(3)). In this space, the municipality and its contractors marked the boundaries of the area by building pavements. They built a drainage system for the whole space to stop the floods in the area. Small green areas were left and most of the floorscape was covered with red gravel. Curved pedestrian paths were built which were linked to circular little plazas where stone benches with concrete seats were built. Further, the bandstand was refurbished and a football court of sand was also built. The municipality finally set up a playground and fenced the whole park. Through these interventions the municipality transformed the whole space in a relatively short period of time, and at a consolidation rate which residents would not have been able to achieve (Figure 6.31 (3-8) and Figure 6.33). This was acknowledged by the residents; however as we saw in chapter 5, residents had visualized and designed the interventions in a different way from the ones built by the municipality. They had planned their public space with great enthusiasm,

however very little of their dreams were achieved (Figure 5.13). In contrast to Mascarenas Park and Jovita Park, where residents kept the control of the creation of their space, this case shows that once the municipality takes control of the public space construction at larger scales, residents have less and less opportunity to influence the design and development of the space. Very little opportunity is allowed for the resident's mark to be made. Neither is much opportunity given to see their public space projects come about. The municipality achieves the culmination of the production of the space in the colonias, consolidating what residents ones initiated, however the nature of development when this actor takes control can completely change the original plans.

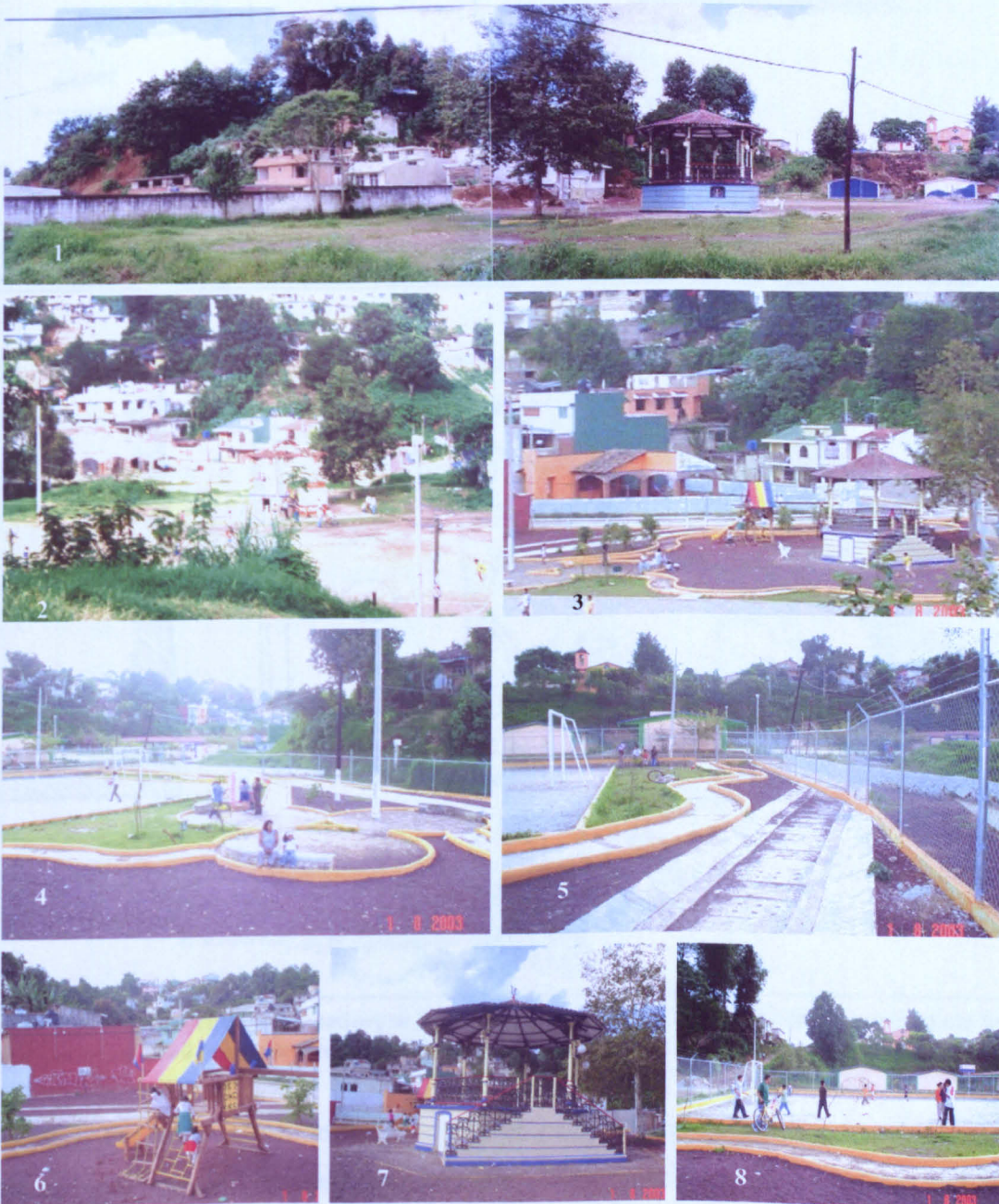


Figure 6.31 Transformation of the public space of Colonia Tres de Mayo. Photos 1 and 2 show the way the space remained for many years, the space was only used as a football field. The following pictures show the transformations carried out by the municipality. (Photographs 1 and 2 were provided by Ameyally Gonzalez).

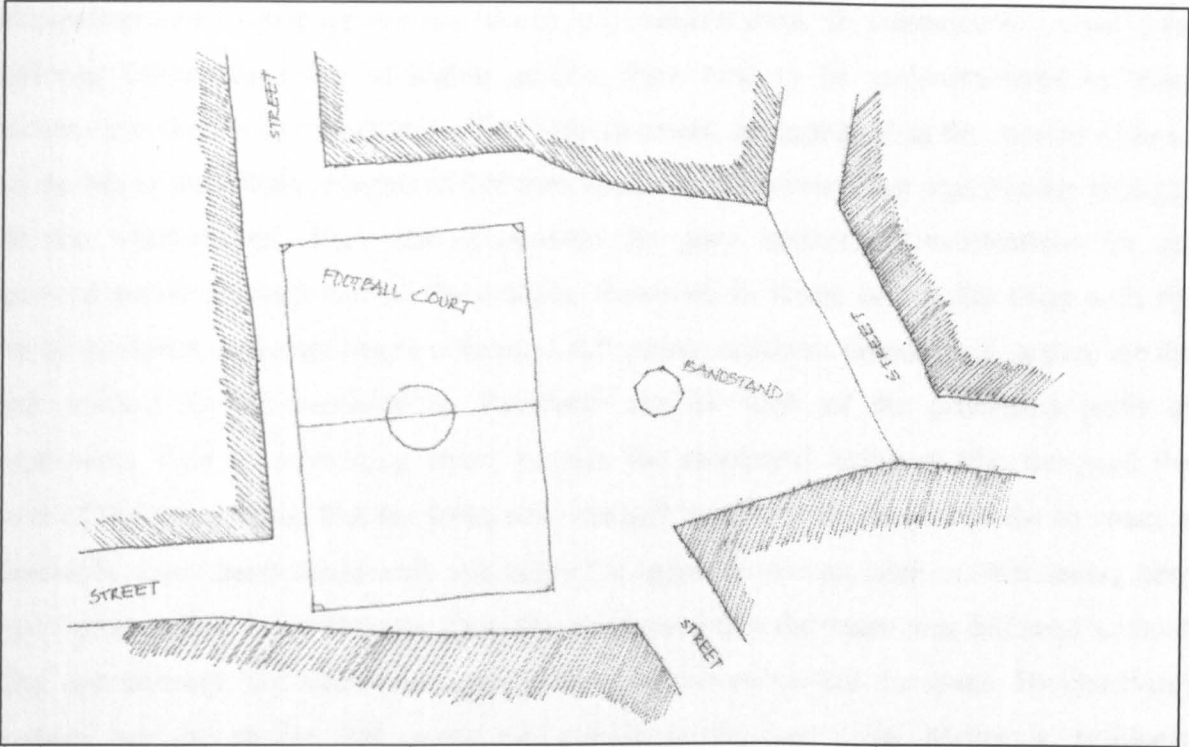


Figure 6.32 Initial interventions in the public space of Colonia Tres de Mayo with a bandstand and football field.

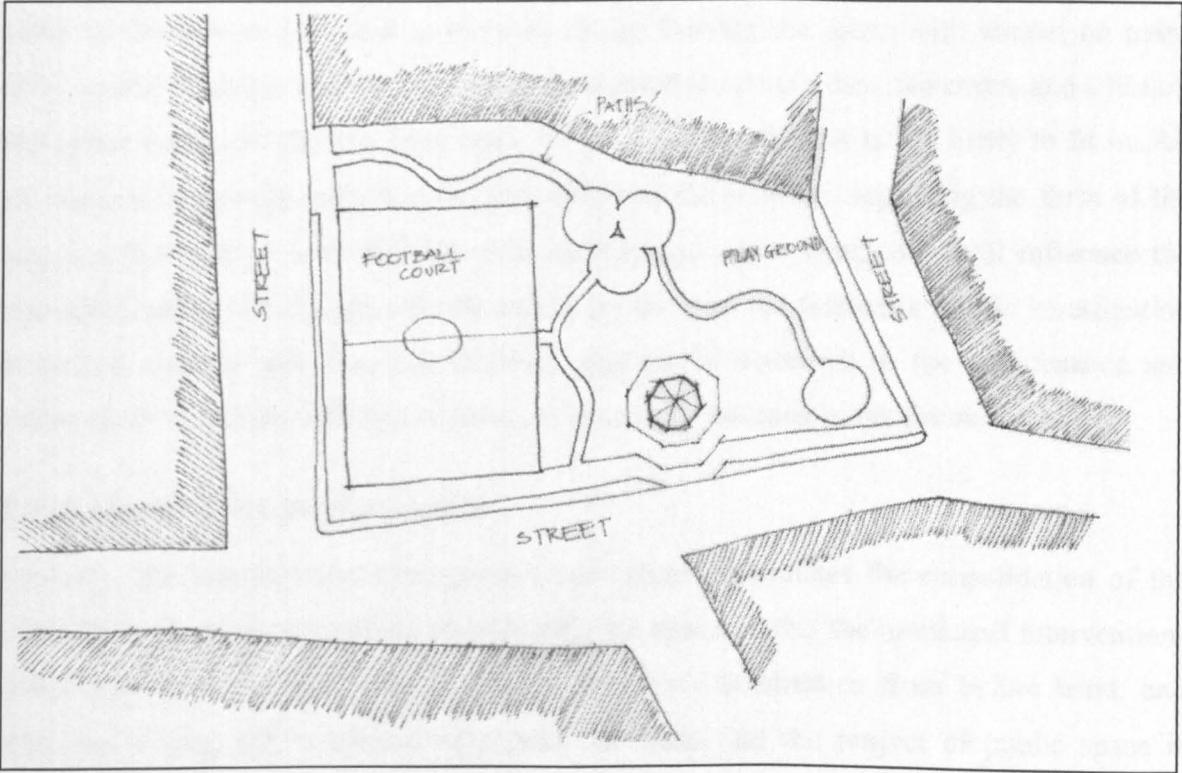


Figure 6.33 Interventions according to the municipal officials. The materialization carried out by the municipality included vehicular streets, and the spaces was significantly reduced.

In this way, the materialisation stage moves from a bottom up process in which residents initiate and promote the development of their public spaces envisaging ideas, and making used of their knowledge and resources, to a top down process where residents' aspirations,

participation and knowledge are not taking into consideration. In consequence, even if the municipal interventions are of higher quality, these tend to be underestimated by those residents involved in the promotion of the improvement, as happened in the case of Colonia Tres de Mayo. Residents recognized that their outdoor environment has significantly changed with the interventions. They also recognized the good impact of interventions for the improved social development of the colonia. However, in terms of identification with the form of the space, imagined the development differently, residents do not really appreciate the forms created by the municipality. Residents see the form of the pedestrian paths as complicated. This is an interesting issue, because the municipal architect who designed the layout of the park, argues that the paths were created in an organic shape in order to create a promenade where users could walk and enjoy the space. However, later on after seeing how people move and perceive the new park, she recognizes that the space was designed without taking into account how users had already used and moved around the space. By observing the space one can realize that people rarely walk on the new paths. Moreover, residents thought about having many more trees and green areas. In fact, the trees and plants initially planted by them were removed in the new design leaving the space with almost no trees. Finally, as mentioned in chapter five, residents wanted to set up a day care centre and a library in the space however with the form made by the municipality this is not likely to fit in. All these aspects negatively influence the perception of the residents regarding the form of the space, and the lack of identification with the physical space eventually will influence the future engagement of residents with the space. By the time the fieldwork of this investigation was carried out the park was just finished, and the involvement in the maintenance and attitudes of the residents with this space is an issue to be assessed in the future.

6.5.6 A continuous improvement

Commonly, the municipality, through its interventions, completes the consolidation of the space; however residents continue transforming the spaces. After the municipal interventions colonias residents continue with the project they have undertaken from before hand, and realize that having got municipal help does not mean that the project of public space is finished. On the contrary the materialisation of the space is undertaken again by residents. They continue to pursue their goals, aspirations and projects about the space and this makes them interact with their public space in order to improve and enhance their space according to their different needs in terms of function, aesthetic aspects, and even security and control. In order to illustrate this we can draw on Villahermosa Park of Colonia Ferrocarrilera. A Park

which was initially improved by the residents, and then later on, it was consolidated by the municipality's interventions. In fact Villahermosa Park and Jovita Park were both improved by the municipality at the same time in 1994. In this park the municipality defined the area with pavements; and fenced the whole space with a metallic net. They built a little central circular plaza with four concrete benches, built a small court and planted trees and grass. Finally they set up some swings (Figure 6.34: (1 to 4) and Figure 6.35 (1)). The area has a long rectangular shape which after municipal interventions was left empty, as requested by the residents, because the main agents of change (Señor Artemio and his followers) had had the idea of converting this park in a big playground for all ages. Therefore, even after municipal intervention, the area has been constantly improved for around ten years. Many different changes can be seen since the municipal intervention; interventions which have taken place little by little through time with residents own resources (Figure 6.34(5 to 12) and Figure 6.35(2)).

Residents and Señor Artemio 'the blacksmith' (the same person who helped Los Pinos' residents to build their playground), have made constant and significant changes. The playground has been constantly upgraded by introducing new games and playground equipment every year. Nowadays, it has two big slides for adults, another two for children, six jumping horses for both children and adults, flying chairs for little kids, two treadmills for exercising, three seesaws, six swings, and two carrouseles. Very recently they have set up a table tennis. Moreover, they have managed to get the park with its own electrical installation so they can repair the play equipment when necessary. The life of the park is enlivened with two speakers so it is possible to play music and listen to the radio in the whole park all day long. One of the latest interventions is the setting up of an iron structure with the shape of person-ant (Figure 6.34(12)) which encourages and invites people to visit their park. The blacksmith, with external financial help and with the help of the small group of residents, has truly built a space for the enjoyment of all; for children, youth and adults. This was the public space, residents of Ferrocarrilera had imagined and planned, and eventually developed.

The residents involved in the transformation of Villahermosa Park have not only been working on the playground, they have also worked to improve some other parts of the park. The municipality fenced the park with a very cheap and weak metallic mesh, which does not resist much and the residents did not like (Figure 6.34(3)).



Figure 6.34: A continuous improvement is carried out in Villahermosa Park. Photos 1 to 3 show the interventions done by the municipality in 1994. Photos 4 to 12 show the situation of Villahermosa Park in 2003 with all the games and furniture built and set up by community's main promoters in the last 10 years. (Photographs 1 to 3 were provided by Señora Galdina Vazquez).

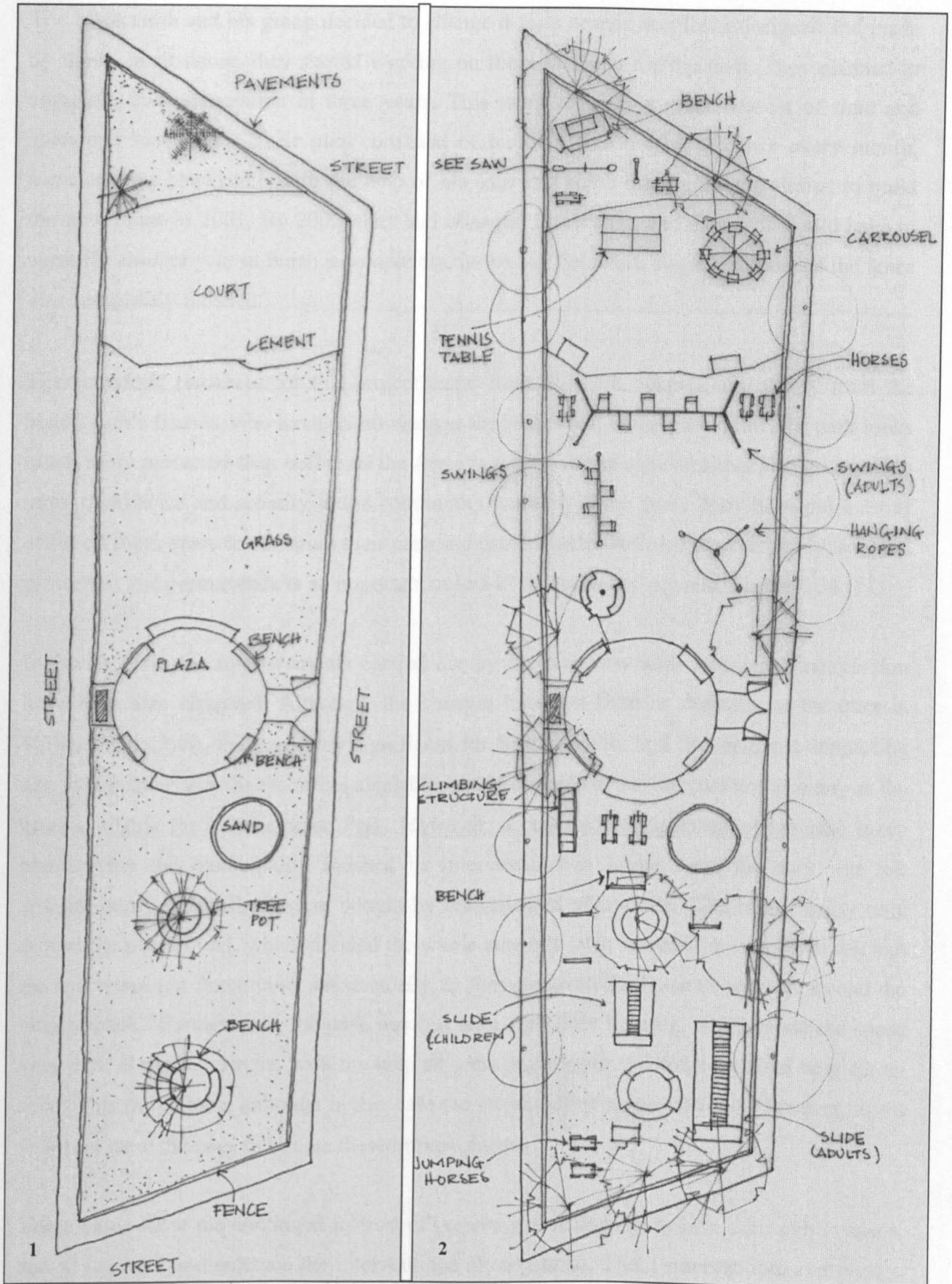


Figure 6.35 Improvements in Villahermosa's Park. Plan 1 shows the initial interventions in the construction of the park carried out by the municipality. Plan 2 shows all the interventions carried out by the residents: play equipment such as slides, jumping horses, carrouseles, seesaws, climbing structures, benches, swings new fences had been set up.

The blacksmith and his group decided to change it for a proper iron fence designed and made by them. In so doing, they started working on the new fence for the park. They planned to complete this intervention in three years. This work requires a great amount of time and economic resources. Their plan consisted of building five meters of fence every month, therefore, the blacksmith with the help of his sons and some other colleges, started to build the new fence in 2001. By 2002, they had changed 120 meters and they still would have to work for another year to finish it completely, in the last fieldwork stage, we saw that the fence was completely finished.

The economic resources for this project came from different people, and mainly from the blacksmith's friends, who have acknowledged the work done in the park. Now, the park looks much more protected than before as the fence is a very strong structure that also gives much more confidence and security to the community working in the park. They have put a lot of effort all these years to construct their park and provide entertainment for everybody, so good protection and permanence is an important aspect in the residents' agenda (Figure 6.34 (11)).

In Jovita Park, the improvements carried out by the residents after municipal intervention have been also observed. Although, the changes have not been as dramatic as the ones in Villahermosa Park, they are very significant for Señora Jovita and the residents supporting her. It is evident that the resources available to the residents of Jovita's are not as many as the ones available for Villahermosa Park. However, a continuous improvement has also taken place. After the municipality finished its interventions in Jovita Park, the park was left without benches, but these were bought by the residents afterwards. The municipality only fenced the playground, which divided the whole area into two; however the residents felt that the space was not functioning satisfactorily, so they removed the fence to set it up around the whole space. Furthermore, the park was left with very little lighting, which made the space very dark at night. Jovita, with the help of some neighbours and some external help set up new lights in the park, although in this case the municipality cooperated too. However, again residents were the ones to initiate these improvements

These cases show the continued interest of popular residents to transform their public space, and to improve and enhance the interventions already done. These interventions represent a great achievement in the consolidation of public space. A great achievement involves having got help from the municipality and seeing developed their very first aspirations about the

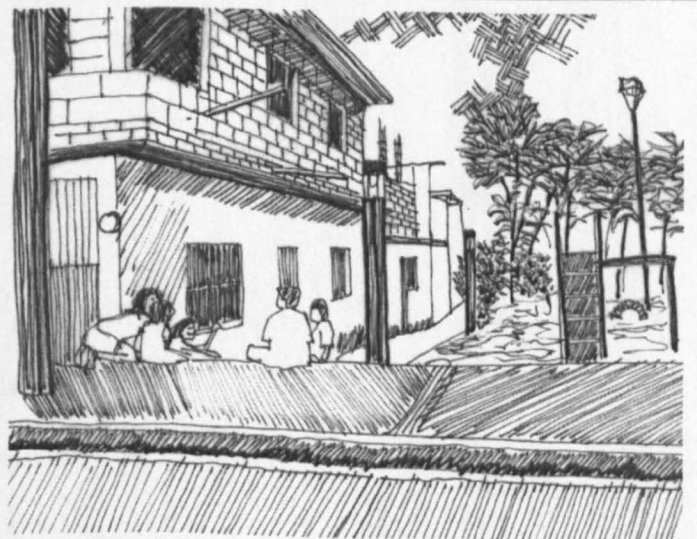
spaces: to have a public space. However, once the primary needs are satisfied in the provision of public space, aspirations for a better space that fulfils even more aspirations of aesthetics, better functionality, a sense of place, and durability and security comes to high. Even though there is a scarcity of resources residents still care about the materials, colours, and design of the space. They do not only care about getting whatever is possible; it is also about the quality of the interventions. In this way, those involved in public space improvement continue carrying out transformations, and even change what was got from the municipality for something better as was seen in Villahermosa and Jovita Parks. As Señor Artemio of Villahermosa Park states *“Changes need to be done; we have to change those benches, which are too small, we think about making the little plaza something much cosier and more communal”*. The construction of the central little plaza of Villahermosa Park was built by the construction workers who by chance had extra cement, so they built a central little plaza within the park (Figure 6.34(4)). However, the idea of changing it and improving it is in the plans of those concerned with the space. Señor Artemio continues: *“We are thinking about making the benches for seven persons instead of three, in a circular shape and perhaps a little bandstand in the middle with music so people perhaps can sit there and read”*. A continued improvement involves thinking about the future, and this relates back to the discussion about the future aspirations and visions that residents construct for their urban environment. Señor Artemio visualises changes and improvements in the park and he also visualises these improvements based on his experiences, knowledge and culture. He got the idea of a bandstand from his knowledge of the traditional parks of the central areas of the city, which usually have a bandstand. Moreover he knows he has got the skills to build a bandstand; not surprisingly, we may find a bandstand in the central little plaza of Villahermosa Park in the future.

6.6 Conclusions

Little importance is given to the allocation of public space for recreation in the neighbourhood environment; these spaces are left in marginal or residual areas within the settlements and even worse, frequently public spaces are not set aside. However, it has also been seen how the need of public space is recognized by residents through their interaction and engagement with the spaces. In this way they acknowledge the importance of public space within the neighbourhood environment. Firstly, we have seen how residents create meaningful representations which reveal their aims and expectations for a healthy urban environment.

Secondly colonias' residents initiate the materialisation of their aspirations and visualizations of public space with their own resources and knowledge by creating spaces which also show their identity and character. However, in order to achieve permanent consolidation of public space, residents commonly request help from the municipality. When the municipality takes over the development of public space two different approaches are observed, the municipality can interact with the community during the construction process in order to satisfy the community's aspiration. On the other hand, the municipality can neglect residents' aspirations and demands, by dominating and imposing their own interests while improving the space. This chapter demonstrates how colonias' residents care about the function, form and the aesthetics of their public space and how they intervene in the materialisation process in order to achieve their aspirations. This is demonstrated through their actions to create their pavements, streets and neighbourhood parks. In some cases they build their own dreams and plans and these are physically constructed by themselves. In some other cases the municipality controls the process. However residents may take up the actions of improvement after the municipality's intervention is over. These might be through interventions of personalisation and continuous improvement in order to eventually achieve their imagined public space. In this way, based on local knowledge, life experiences and acts of everyday habitation residents become local designers of their cityscape. In the following chapter we will see how the developed public space discussed here, is spatially and symbolically consumed, and how these actions shape the character and identity of the urban environment of the colonias.

Chapter Seven



The Consumption of Public Space

The Consumption of Public Spaces

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7.1 Introduction

So far the way the public space is created at different levels within the colonias has been examined. From pavements, to streets and in neighbourhood parks, we have seen how public space is produced by colonias' residents themselves and by both residents and local authorities in collaboration. It has been demonstrated how both use and action transform spaces and produce physical public places which proves the significant role of these urban elements within the urban consolidation process of colonias populares. This chapter will begin to examine the uses and actions of colonias' residents, not as physical producers but as social consumers of the neighbourhood environment. This part of the thesis is based on the observations carried out in the public spaces. In this analysis, residents of colonias are seen as consumers of the space, but at the same time as constructors of their everyday public life.

Low defines the social construction of space as the actual transformation of the space, through people's social exchanges, memories, images and daily use of the material setting, into scenes and action that convey meaning (Low 2000:128). Following this framework, already discussed in Chapter two, the chapter focuses on the use and social life before and after physical transformation and improvement. It studies the daily use and activities carried out by colonias' residents in the public realm; it examines the different conflicts that arise from the myriad of forms of public space appropriation by individuals and groups (influenced by age, gender, interests and culture); and it also explores the nature of management and control that different agents exercise over the space. Apart from dealing with the functional and social daily activities, the chapter also goes on to reveal the significance, symbolic values and meanings attributed by the colonias' dwellers to public spaces derived from the everyday activities of public space transformation.

7.2 Public daily life and space transformation

The public realm of the colonias is the stage where a mosaic of actions, behaviours, attitudes and values are disclosed. Public spaces and the actions developed by its users unveil the character, identity and culture of a city and its inhabitants. It is in the public realm where the different forms of habitation inform us about the likes, dislikes, conflicts, harmonies, progress and debacles of a society. Actions and uses of the urban space together with the physical production process become 'statements of identity' as Miles (2000) argues. Eventually, these

statements become the reflection of cities' dynamism and diversity. Researchers have argued that the neighbouring relations and use of urban space essentially depends on the socioeconomic status (Hester 1975; Dias Lay 2003). Research carried out in different societies and cultures demonstrates that low –income urban environments show the greater intensity of use in the public space than in higher income residential environments (e.g. Riaño 1990 in Ecuador and Colombia; Hester 1975 in USA). In chapter one the research carried out by Riaño was mentioned. She argues that the urban environment of popular habitats is characterised by a lifestyle where the development of multiple activities and the multiplicity of functions takes place in public, and a great dynamism of use and appropriation in the urban space is observed. These characteristics are observed in the colonias populares of Xalapa. It is also evident that along the neighbourhood consolidation process the multiplicity of functions shaping the colonias' public life goes through a process of transformation. But how does this use-transformation takes place? How do the inhabitants of the colonias use and appropriate the public space of the colonias before and after improvement and transformation? In the following paragraphs, the patterns of use and the rhythms of everyday life in the streets and communal spaces of the colonias are examined on the basis of public space transformation. It is demonstrated that attitudes, practices, actions and perceptions towards public space also evolve along side physical public space consolidation.

7.2.1 Physical transformation and use transformation

Streets and their pavements are the closest public spaces to dwellings in the colonia environment. They represent the setting of a myriad of human activities and it is mainly on the streets of colonias where the domestic urban life unfolds. It has been emphasized that the dynamism of use in public spaces in popular neighbourhoods greatly depends on residents' social identity and kinship relations (Lommitz 1975; Ferreira Dos Santos 1981; Riaño 1992; Viviescas 1989; Riaño 1990). Riaño, in the Barrios populares of Quito (Ecuador) found out that, it is the social environment, rather than the physical environment, that creates a positive image of urban space (Riano 1993:168). Therefore the social environment is also the main factor influencing the use of the space. However, the provision, upgrading and improvement of the quality of public space, also stimulates the use and appropriation of it. In the case of colonias populares in Xalapa, it was found that the physical qualities of the public space strongly influence the intensity, vitality of use and daily life of the public urban space. Residents of the colonias in this study have expressed their will to go out; however the underdevelopment and low quality of the public space (muddy or flooded) often constrain

their activities in the public realm. Carmona et al.(2003:106) points out regarding these issues that 'while physical factors are neither the exclusive nor necessarily the dominant influence on behaviour, environmental opportunities clearly affect what people can or cannot do'. After transformation, the existence of a paved carriageway and pavements provides accessibility, security, linkage, and permeability to the colonias' environment where services and transport can now access. Moreover, pedestrian and vehicular movement along the street increases. Pedestrians choose to walk on paved streets rather than on unimproved ones and children prefer to play in improved streets as well. All this movement and new activities encourages residents to go out and contemplate the new life of the street. Physical transformation also leads to use transformation of the neighbourhood environment. It has been argued that the vitality of public space in popular neighbourhoods is greatly influenced by social relations, however, higher quality and rates of consolidation of public space also foster the use and social interaction in the urban space. This relates to what Gehl (1987:236-38) states:

"In streets and city spaces of poor quality, only the bare minimum of activity takes place. And they occur faster. On the other hand in a high quality space necessary activities take a longer time. A wide range of optional and social activities will also occur because place and situation now invite people to stop, sit, eat, and play, and so on".¹

On the other hand, there are contextual factors which strongly affect the development of public life in the colonias environment along the consolidation process. One factor is related to the satisfaction of the private environment. Kellett (1995) in his studies in popular settlements in Colombia found that 'many activities take place outside the walls of the house, and that **this is particularly so in smaller unconsolidated dwellings** [...] activities spill out from the plot into the street itself. In fact we can regard the street area in front of the dwelling as a shared extension of the dwelling itself' (my emphasis). Kellett further argues that this gives the street, neighbourhood or community a function which is neither purely public nor private. However, with higher levels of dwelling consolidation and a greater satisfaction of the private environment fewer activities take place in the public space. Thus, activities that used to take place outside in the immediate public space gradually shift to occur in the private

¹ Jan Gehl, in his book *Life between Buildings* (1987) identifies three types of human activities in public space: necessary, optional and social activities. People engage in the first type more or less when they are obliged to do so because of their jobs or studies, for shopping, for distributing mail, to wait for the bus, and so on. These activities are "what you have to do". People participate in the optional activities if they feel like it, time and environmental conditions permitting, by taking a breath of fresh air, watching a street show, sunbathing. These activities are "what you get tempted to do, when given the right conditions". Social activities are to some extent an outcome of the previous one, since they depend on the physical presence of others, this means meeting your fellow citizens. This division into three types is aimed at understanding the possible relationships with the shape of the spaces. The shape of the space, in fact, has little or no influence in the case of necessary activities, while it is crucial in optional ones.

environment as the consolidation of the private space develops. As we mentioned in chapter five, residential mobility and a gentrification process along the consolidation of the settlement influenced the collective organization towards protection and development of public spaces. However this also influences the use of public space. Neighbours share fewer common interests in which to establish contact. Social homogeneity, the degree in which people feel that they are alike to their neighbours, proves to be decisive (Blauw 1993:243). Eventually, the lack of homogeneity, mainly due to gentrification, provokes fragmentation of social networks, as perceived at the street level by the oldest residents of colonia Revolución. For example Señor Jorge, a resident of Carlos Segundo Street who has been the promoter of the improvement of his street for many years, argues that the social relations among neighbours have changed in his street. Nowadays there are new people and it is very difficult to come together *"We used to gather on Saturdays to clean and sweep the street; later on we ate and chat together the whole morning. Now, it does not happen anymore I don't get along with the new neighbours"* (Señor Jorge).

These factors constrain public life in colonias populares at the higher stages of consolidation, however, their urban space still has a greater liveability than the urban space of higher income groups where public space is used very little for social interaction. In improved colonias, the public environment is still very alive, and public space physical transformation and improvement encourage residents to use and appropriate the streets and other neighbourhood open spaces. Differences in public life are seen within the neighbourhood environment and this is due to the fact that some streets are more alive than others because residents in some streets keep stronger neighbourhood ties than in others. These aspects, together with the quality and physical characteristics of the space determine spatial activity patterns, social interaction and the concentration of public life around public spaces in the colonias.

While the improved streets increase their activity and use, the unpaved and unimproved streets are very little used. Most unpaved streets are empty during day and night. It is observed that these streets are mainly used as space for necessary activities such as circulation, and mostly by residents living there. In streets where pavements have been built, although still unpaved, residents go out to sit outside on the pavement with their neighbours; however to a lesser degree than in fully consolidated ones, where some residents use their pavement to seat and socialized on regular basis. Even though full physical consolidation (paved carriage way) has not been reached yet, the fact that pavements exist, stimulates

outdoor activity. However, these streets are often not seen as spaces for staying and socializing, but rather as spaces for movement and circulation. It is evident that these uses are influenced by the fact that improved public spaces exist within the neighbourhood environment. This makes residents compare the quality of the different spaces, and therefore they prefer those spaces with higher physical qualities. This contrasts with less consolidated peripheral neighbourhoods, where most, if not all, public spaces remain undeveloped and unimproved, here a lack of choice prevails as well as the lack of a full consolidated private space. This leads to more intensive use and appropriation of the public environment in spite of its environmental qualities². In neighbourhoods which are reaching higher levels of consolidation, and where the majority of dwellings are also highly consolidated and a greater number of consolidated public spaces exist, it is evident that quality of the physical characteristic of the public space matters. Residents and users are more conscious about what is good or bad, clean or dirty, paved or unpaved, with or without pavements and this influences their behaviour. The higher quality of the space plays the role of facilitator and supporter and is directly related to the intensity of use and appropriation. Therefore, in the urban environment of more consolidated neighbourhoods where there is a greater number of consolidated public spaces, public life in the colonia is more concentrated in the improved areas. These public spaces represent choices for users.

7.2.2 Changing walking patterns

One of the differences in use from the unimproved to the enhanced public realm of the colonias, are seen in walking patterns. The transformation of the street reveals how the patterns of vehicular and pedestrian movement are reorganized by the existence of physical clues such as carriage ways, pavements, and street gardens. These physical elements communicate meanings to pedestrians and these clues influence behaviour, as described by Lynch (1960; 1981). The reality of material public space reshapes people's behaviours and this is demonstrated in the evolution of walking patterns after a transformation. Before improvement, the public realm is characterized by an environment where there are no physical elements to order movement and circulation. There are no clues about where to walk on and therefore people mainly walk in the middle of the streets (Figure 7.1). It seems that the middle of the street is the best place to walk. It is clear and more even, and it is far from the facades of the dwellings, where the public space is usually appropriated by the extension of

² ²Riaño (1990) in Ecuador and Colombia as well as Kellett (1994) in Colombia, both describe the intensive use of public spaces in low-income neighbourhoods at earlier stages of consolidation. This is also observed in low income neighbourhoods in Mexico.

the private environment. The border between the street and the house may be occupied or may have uneven pavements, a household's gardens, or some other obstructing objects which impedes the easy movement of pedestrians. When the municipality builds the pavement along the whole street such as in the case of Pascos de Xalapa, people still walk in the middle of the street at the beginning, but gradually people adjust their patterns of movement to the new elements of the public space. On the other hand, there are streets in which despite the fact that both pavements and carriage way have been improved pedestrians prefer to walk in the middle on the carriage way. This is usually in streets built on difficult topography (common in Xalapa) which gives rise to build uneven pavements, with curbs and steps. In these streets pedestrians always look for even surfaces to walk on. In general, constructing the public space of the street provides an order for movement, where cars and pedestrians now have their own place to move which did not exist before. Before the transformation, cars and pedestrians moved without a defined space, this obviously affected the security of pedestrians in busy roads. Improvement brings about security which increases the confidence of pedestrians and encourages not only movement, but also social interaction in the public space of the colonia. Gehl (1999:258) argues that 'walking is certainly not merely a mode of transport, it also serves as a social process where you constantly meet, see and hear other people, and it is an activity from which you – at the spur of the moment- can shift to other types of activities'. As Gehl points out, walking is a primary activity taking place in the public space of the colonias which leads to social interaction, and which is facilitated with the improvement of the physical qualities³.



Figure 7.1 Walking patterns before transformation. There are no clues about where to walk, and therefore people mainly walk in the middle of the streets. The middle of the street is the best place to walk, far from the buildings' facades and the boundary of private-public which may be appropriated by residents.

³ The significance of quality improvement to daily and social activities in cities can be observed where pedestrian streets or traffic zones have been established in existing urban areas. Improved physical conditions have resulted in a doubling of the number of pedestrians, a lengthening of the average time spent outdoors and a considerably broader spectrum of outdoor activities (Gehl, 1987)

The existence of clues in the public spaces of the colonias for pedestrian movement contributes to social public contact and enhances social interaction among residents. On the pavements of the streets residents also build up the element of 'trust' which is an essential element for city street life (Jacobs, 1961:56).

7.2.3 Streets for play

Children and youngsters are essential performers of the vitality of the streets in the colonias, since they spend a longer time in the outdoor neighbourhood environment than adults. When the streets are unpaved in the whole colonia, children play in the street they live, very close to their dwellings, however once some streets get paved more users come to those improved streets, and especially children come to play. Residents of the colonias think that children can play anywhere (Figure 7.2). It could be also thought that the surrounding environmental conditions are the last thing children think when playing. Colonias residents usually say: *"Children play anywhere, they are happy playing on the mud, they like to play in the ditches of the drains, and they also play in the vacant lots"* (Galdina, Colonia Ferrocarrilera).

However, it has been seen that when improvement and transformations have taken place in streets, children also change their place of play from an undeveloped street to improved and paved streets. It is evident that children move from the unimproved streets, to spend time and to play in the most consolidated ones. This is especially true for older children. Children living in undeveloped and muddy streets, move to the improved spaces to play ballgames, use toys and bikes almost immediately paved streets appear near their home. It is common to find on newly paved street every afternoon, both on weekdays and weekends, children who come from other undeveloped streets nearby playing with children living in the developed street (Figure 7.3)



Figure 7.2 Playing in unimproved streets. These pictures show children playing near their house before public space improvement. (Photographs provided by Señor Lucio Sanchez)



Figure 7.3 Playing in improved streets. Children living in undeveloped “muddy” streets, once there are better paved streets nearby their house, they move to the improved streets to play ballgames, or use toys and bikes with other children. They change their play setting.

Therefore, the most improved streets with the best environmental qualities are most used by children. It is clear that the physical qualities of streets influence the intensity of actions and practices taking place on them and therefore increase the vitality of the street. Thus, on daily basis, the improved streets of the colonia, rather than being used only to satisfy the necessity of movement, they also become the space of active engagement, socialization, and enjoyment for children and youth at different times of the day, during weekdays and weekends. This contrasts with the limited use in unimproved areas. Señor Juan from Colonia Revolucion comments on the changes seen in his street:

“We notice the changes in our street [...] in here there are not many children but now they come a lot to play from other places, people go out much more than before, we notice the changes immediately....”

Another example of the increase of use of a street after improvement takes place in Zumarraga Street in colonia Revolucion where children and teenagers also play much more in the recently paved street. Señor Manuel⁴ continued the transformation of the space encouraging the youngsters to play in the street by setting up a basketball ring on his façade. In so doing, the street, apart from functioning as a football court, it also serves as basket ball court, and teenagers from other streets come to play. Furthermore, residents, such as Señor Manuel, who have been in close interaction with the space through their involvement in public space improvement and consolidation, feel so proud of their achievements. Therefore they encourage other residents to appropriate the pavements and streets and enjoy the achievements through greater use. The improved streets and pavements provide a better

⁴ Señor Manuel is the main promoter of the transformation of Zumarraga Street, mentioned already in previous chapters.

setting for socialization and for a wide range of activities in which needs of comfort, relaxation, and active and passive engagement can easily be satisfied. Therefore, the improved street provides residents the opportunity to engage with their immediate public life. Public space becomes supportive as Rapoport (1986) argues. According to Rapoport, the environment offers supportiveness through cues, not only physical but also through people's behaviour, which tell people about how to use and engage with the environment.

7.2.4 Pavements and social interaction

While children and youngsters use the streets for playing, mainly on the carriages way, pavements also become the space for adults. The fact that children play outside encourages adults to go out as well. In most urban environments, it is seen that when children are playing outside, at some point their parents also go out to watch them. In the colonias' environment, this is also a reason for adults to go out to the public space and use the street and the pavement for social interaction rather than movement. In many streets, especially in improved ones, adults often go out to sit outside on the pavement on daily basis and more at weekends. For example, in the improved streets of colonia Revolucion on a Friday or a Saturday night is common to see groups of adults seating or standing on the pavements talking, eating, listening to music, or simply observing the life of their street. Some of them watch their children and some others socialize with their neighbours. In Isabela Catolica Street in colonia Revolucion, Señora Santa, her husband and her sisters in law like to seat outside every evening for two or three hours (Figure 7.4). They sit on the pavement while their children are playing outside, they say that they sit there to watch the children but they like to gossip and they like being outside eating, and listening to music. Moreover, in those pavements where residents have built big garden pots with bricks and concrete, these are used by the passers-by as benches, and as places in the street to stop and rest. It is interesting how these elements created by the residents for security and protection and even for decoration, are also used as spaces for resting, sitting, eating, or enjoying the shade of a tree.

Cristobal de Olid is another street which has recently been improved in colonia Revolucion. It has been upgraded with the construction of pavements and carriageway. After transformation the street became much more alive, activities increased, especially on weekdays and weekends in the afternoons and evenings (between 5 and 9pm). Many people go outside, children play, and adults sit on the pavement watching and talking. Some stand at their

houses' entrances with doors⁵ open, and some shop owners have put merchandise out on the pavement too. The dichotomy of public-private blurs through social and spatial actions. The multifunctional dimension of the popular habitat is tangible in the pavement (Hernandez 2002).

While pedestrians use the improved streets more, the vehicular traffic also increases. Drivers also prefer to drive on the paved streets rather than on the muddy and holed streets where cars may get damaged. This increase in vehicular traffic is perceived by street residents as a threat to their security, and mainly to children's security who also like to use the street more than before. In the past, on unimproved streets children could play outside with little protection from their parents because cars hardly passed by and if they did, they would do it slowly. Now that, they enjoy an enhanced street there are many more cars passing by, and now they go much faster. Therefore, parents are constantly worried about their children when they are playing outside. We will discuss this issue later in the chapter.



Figure 7.4 Socializing on pavements. In many streets the colonias especially those improved ones, adults often go out especially when there is good weather during weekends and weekdays to sit outside on their pavement. In the first picture the researcher is sitting with Señora Santa who is eating outside waiting for her sister's in law to go out and sit with her.

⁵ Research in popular environments has highlighted the relationship between public and private in popular environments. Riaño argues that the difference between the two spaces tends to be perceived as an inside/outside difference rather than as private/public difference. The door is seen as the border between inside and outside, between private and public; the door is often open, people stand there observing others walking by, waiting for somebody to talk to. In contrast, in high income neighbourhoods a guard controls access to the door (Riaño, 1990). The Colombian anthropologist Edilsa Rojas argues that the door and the windows provide an entertainment without going out from the house. It is another way of establishing a relation with the outside with pedestrians, neighbours, and the news of the neighbourhood (Rojas, et al. 1997)

7.2.5 Men, women and the street

During the day time women make significant use of public spaces. Women's use of public space is closely related to their traditional roles (shopping for family food, taking children to and from school, supervising children's play and accompanying them to the medical centre). This means that for certain periods in the day, the street becomes a sphere of 'feminine' activity (Segovia 1997:89). Women also use the public spaces for recreation and socialization, perhaps taking children to the play ground or simply talking with a neighbour outside in the afternoon. Later in the evening, a difference is seen, and more men than women use public spaces. In the colonias, young male adults spend long time sitting outside on the pavements. They may be sitting outside the street's shop or perhaps somewhere else, in groups until late at night, especially when the weather allows it. It is common to see young

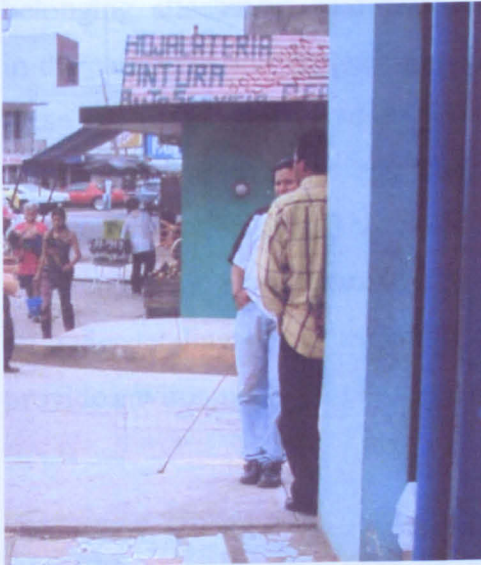


Figure 7.5 Men usually standing on street corners meeting friends, talking to people or just watching.

men in groups of four to six sitting outside on the pavements, or gathering in the sport courts of neighbourhood parks⁶. Women are rarely seen in such public meetings. Groups of men also meet in street corners to chat with friends (Figure 7.5). Women are rarely standing on a corner street for a long time like men. The behaviour of men and women in public spaces of the colonias are similar to those observed in other popular environments in Latin America such as in Chile by Olga Segovia who affirms that men's use of public space in the *barrios* is more strongly oriented towards external entertainment and social activity rather than towards household traditional tasks (Segovia 1997).

Teenage girls are seen in public space in the evening in areas near a school when they finish their daily academic activities. They mostly use public spaces for movement and not much for socialization at this time. Moreover, women's use of public space at night also depends in their perceptions of security and safety. Unimproved, dark streets, where groups of men may be gathered represent places of fear for women. On the other hand, behaviours are also shaped by culture, and street life has connotations among the popular culture in Latin America.

⁶ This resembles to what Salazar Cruz (1999) describes about the daily life of the inhabitants of colonias populares in Mexico City.

Perhaps the most common is related to women and evening street life which often suggests a bad reputation, low values and even prostitution.

7.2.6 Children and Vacant plots

Regarding the use for recreation and social interaction of vacant plots allocated for public use different attitudes and behaviours are observed in these spaces during their transformation. Children are the first users of vacant plots of the neighbourhood. They appropriate these spaces through play activities, running around in the weeds, exploring the environment, hiding from friends, and sitting on the ground. In colonia Revolucion and Ferrocarrilera adults got engaged in the use process encouraged by the children's activities taking place on the spaces. Moreover, in Jovita's park different social activities (play or parties) were carried by parents and children in the vacant plots. In these cases the social use gave place to a sense of belonging, attachment, appropriation as well as recognition of the importance of these spaces in the children's and neighbourhood's life (Figure 7.6). The fact that children start playing in these spaces encourages adults (especially those who are parents) living around, to embrace the idea of improvement and transformation in order to provide a better environment for children's development. This confirms what Hart (1979) argues in his pioneering work about children's play. Hart discusses how children explore the environment and only by developing an understanding of that exploration can other people, namely adults, begin to design and provide environments for play that will be meaningful to children (cited in Woolley 2003:10).



Figure 7.6 Using vacant plots .Children and parents using their open space playing together in Jovita's park at the very earliest stages of improvement. (Photographs provided by Señora Jovita Rodriguez).

7.2.7 Spaces for sports

In the first stages of neighbourhood consolidation, most vacant plots available for public use are used for sport activities by children and youngsters. However, these activities are significantly affected when these spaces have been invaded, such as happened in Colonia Revolucion and in other colonias. In this colonia, after illegal invasion and privatization of public spaces, sport activities and recreational uses disappeared; this negatively affected the social life of the residents living around the spaces.

The existing public spaces for sports such as fields and basketball courts are frequently used for basketball and football. In large spaces, matches become a main recreational activity especially on weekday afternoons (between 5 to 9pm) and weekends all day. In spaces such as those located in Colonia Tres de Mayo and in colonia Revolucion, children, teenagers and adults, men and occasionally women use the space to play football. These spaces may not be improved, however, the users keep the spaces alive and attribute them a full and permanent meaning. In this way, permanent football tournaments are organized every weekend in the colonias by the 'colonia's league'. On Saturdays and Sundays, these spaces become full of life with matches starting on Saturday afternoon at 4 pm until the evening, and on Sunday the whole day from 8 pm until 6 pm. (Figure 7.7) A resident of colonia Revolucion said:

"On Sundays, on the court, children play first, then afterwards the older ones, women play too, and many people come from many other colonias to play, to chat and so on, then afterwards they stay longer to have a drink ..."



Figure 7.7 Spaces for sports. Sport courts are mostly occupied by men in the colonias; women use these spaces very little.

The public spaces for sports become places of social gathering on weekends. The spectators are mostly men, although there may be some women and children also watching and meeting friends. When the youngest children are playing, their parents come to support them. In the colonias populares women also participate in the tournaments, there are around three matches played by women, however as in most cultures football is a predominantly practiced by men. Basketball is also played in the colonias, but not as much as football. In Colonia Revolucion there are three basketball courts, one of them has both facilities, but football is played the most. The social interaction in basketball courts is similar to that described in football courts; however matches are not organized in a league. Basketball courts are also appropriated by men, and women use these spaces very little. After playing, youngsters appropriate the spaces with the same activities they carry out on the streets. They stay there sitting next to the court or on a bench, and chat until late at night. These activities are prolonged especially in summer or holiday periods or when the weather allows it. At these times of the year, the parks are intensively used.

Colonias public spaces for sports are also used in the mornings on weekdays by students of schools nearby. The use of sport courts by students from schools is a common activity. Schools often lack places designated for sport education and therefore the spaces allocated for public use in the colonias are used for these activities. Students go to the parks in the mornings and very early in the afternoon to practice sports, as happens in Solidaridad Park and in the football court of Colonia Revolucion. Teachers and sport instructors take students to these areas ones or twice a week for one hour at lunchtime.

7.2.8 Colonias' parks and playgrounds

Neighbourhood parks in the colonias are not used as much as streets, as streets are the nearest public space to dwellings; they are the most used and appropriated. From the seventies, studies carried out in different urban environments, show the differences in the intensity of activities and uses in the different type of public spaces of the neighbourhood 'much more activity occurred in the streets and sidewalks than in the central playground and open field designated for activity' (Hester 1975:29). Hester further added that 'those spaces which can be used while retaining visual access to the home tend to be used more' (1975:32). Similarly, pavements and streets are the most used public spaces of colonias populares. During our observations of the patterns of use in playgrounds and parks, we observed that activities swap from park to street and vice versa. Frequently, neighbourhood parks are empty and a more

intense social interaction takes place on the streets where children are playing, and adults are standing or sitting. Public life spreads around the neighbourhood environment, and a flow of activities from street to park and playground takes place. Children and adults move from one type of space to another. Crouch (1998) comments on the relationship between parks and streets and their uses and says 'parks are seen from the street; people approach them from the street, and they provide life to the street'. Children playing on the park often move between the park and the street with their bikes or balls (Figure 7.8). In research about children's behaviour in playgrounds in the United Kingdom, it was found that 50 per cent of children leave the playground within fifteen minutes of arriving (Woolley 2003). In the colonias similar patterns are observed, although children come back quickly too.

Adults also visit the colonias' playgrounds, mainly to take care of and play with their children. Adults usually sit on benches and talk to each other while the children play. Moreover, parents engage in social interaction in the playgrounds talking to other parents. Some adults, who were seating on a bench at Villahermosa Park in the afternoon, say: *"well, we met here; we used to be neighbours, what a surprise! While our children are playing, we now meet more often in the park. We talk and gossip"*.

Adults sit on the benches for a while but also engage in the play activities with their children, especially with those under five years old. Parents push them on the swings, and help to climb the slides. This is a very common practice which leads to a social interaction among adults. Playing with their children is a common activity which encourages parents, though mainly women to interact with other women. Therefore, the life around the equipment of the playground is not only about children playing but also about parents talking and standing there, interacting with the space, equipment, children and other adults. The combination of all these activities prolongs the time children stay in the playgrounds. Children together with their parents can spend about one hour in this kind of activities. In spaces such as Villahermosa Park where the main promoters have equipped the park with play equipment designed for children and adults, they both play in the park which makes this space very alive and enjoyable for all ages (Figure 7.9 and 7.11). Adults and children leave the park and enter the street to chat with a neighbour, sit on the pavement, continue playing, look around, and continue their urban practices. All these recreational and social activities are intertwined and flow from one space to another, from street to park and vice versa.



Figure 7.8 Children while playing on the park come and go out between the park and the street with their bikes or balls running, seating, standing, talking with friends.

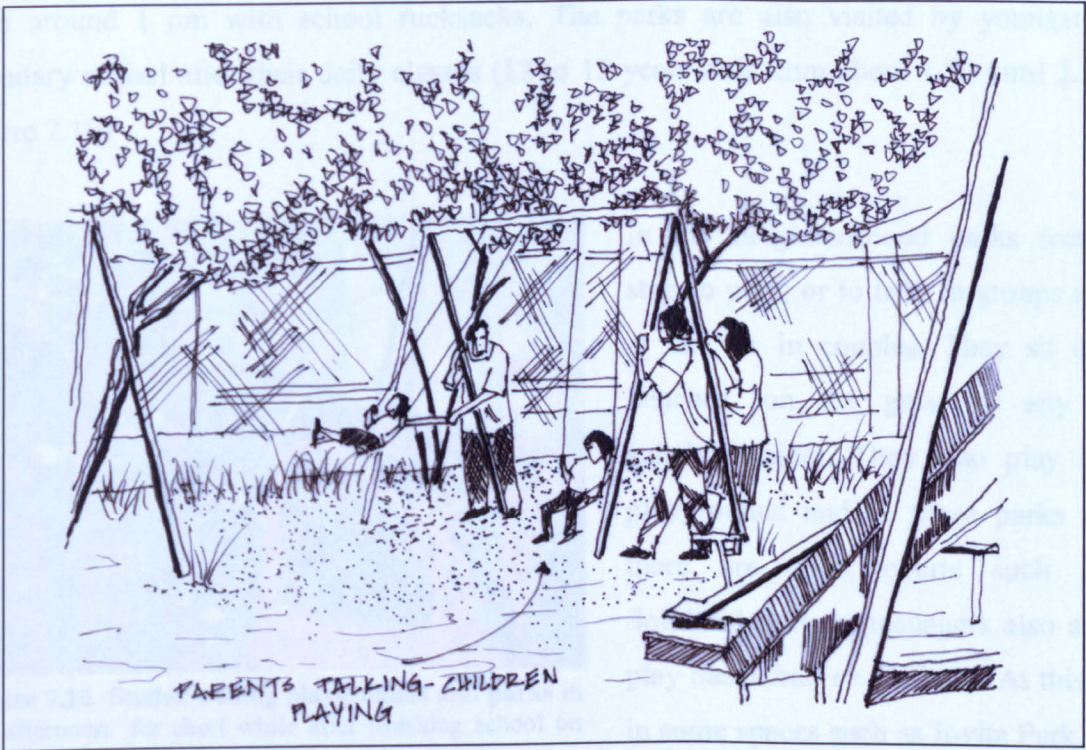


Figure 7.9 Adults socializing in the parks. Adults sit on the benches for a while but also engage in the play activities with their children. The playground is also an opportunity to establish social interaction with other adults.

7.2.9 A day in the neighbourhood parks

Based on our observations in neighbourhood parks, it was found that the colonias' parks are usually empty during the mornings. They are only used as spaces for circulation when adults go to work, to school and so on, but not for social activities. On weekdays, women go out in the morning, to walk children to school. Around noon they go out shopping mainly to the commercial street of the colonia. They may stop and sit on a bench for a short while. Afterwards they pick up their children and come back home, on their way home, people often stop in the neighbourhood parks to play. Children ask their mothers to stop in the playground; they are usually the first visitors to play in the parks. They stay for a short period of time (15 to 20 minutes in average). In this way, it is very common to see women and children in the parks around 1 pm with school rucksacks. The parks are also visited by youngsters of secondary school after their daily classes (12 to 15 years old) from about 1.30 until 2.30pm. (Figure 7.10)



Figure 7.10 Students using playgrounds and parks in the afternoon for short while after finishing school on daily basis.

In the neighbourhood parks teenagers stop to play, or to talk, in groups of five or six, or in couples. They sit on the benches, on the grass or any other suitable object. They also play in the playgrounds and in those parks where there are sport courts such as in Solidaridad Park, teenagers also stop to play basketball or football. At this time, in some spaces such as Jovita Park, some adults are also seen around sitting having

lunch. People bring food to the parks so they sit on the benches eat a snack, have a drink together with their children. Benches are spaces for adults to sit and eat, or rest, and talk to other adults. Adults also take advantage of the shade under the big trees. Spaces with big trees such as Jovita or Villahermosa Park become fresh areas to come, and sit and enjoy a fresh microclimate which cannot be enjoyed on the streets. The streets become very hot early in the afternoon due to big extensions of concrete.

After 3 pm until around 5 pm spaces are not visited very much, and very little use is recorded. This is the time for eating at home and doing other activities in the private environment. The neighbourhood parks start to be more intensively visited from 5 pm until it gets dark around 8 and 9 pm. During this period, if it is not cold or raining, children and parents use and appropriate the spaces as already described. After 9 pm, students again visit the parks, when the evening secondary and high schools finish their activities. Adolescents on the way home, stop in the parks. They enter to the parks to play in the playgrounds for a short while. This usually happens in spaces where there are schools nearby such as in Jovita and Solidaridad Parks in colonia Revolucion as well as in Villahermosa Park in colonia Ferrocarrilera. It is also common to see couples sitting on the benches, talking and kissing, and enjoying the privacy of the darkness. This happens on the benches of Jovita Park which are usually used by couples at night.

Sundays is the peak time for neighbourhood parks, and most parks are very busy especially in the afternoons. On this day, parents and children come from many other colonias to visit them. People arrive by foot, by car or even by public transport, as happens in Villahermosa Park which is the most visited park and playground in a popular neighbourhood in the city. On Sunday, people start arriving from 2 pm and visitors come and go until 8 pm. This place is so intensively used on Sunday afternoons that around 1000 people visit it. Villahermosa Park is a very well maintained space and as we mentioned in Chapter six, their residents in charge of the park are continually improving it and the playground is for both children and adults. Thus, this public space is very attractive for the majority of the population around the colonias populares. Most people know it and they see it as a model to introduce to other colonias. (Figure 7.11)



Figure 7.11 Villahermosa Park is intensively used on weekends, adults and children play together in the wide range of games available.

7.3 Productive Public space

In general, economic activities in urban public spaces are mainly carried out by low income groups. In a context of economic crisis, the development of economic activities by the poor, the unemployed, the excluded and powerless have become a general characteristic of the urban landscape of Mexican cities⁷. A significant number of streets, plazas, and squares in most city centres are totally appropriated by the poor trying to generate an income, and the urban space of the periphery where the lowest income groups live is certainly not the exception⁸. Popular inhabitants do not miss the opportunity to use the public space of their neighbourhood to make a living. In this way, the public space of the neighbourhood is not only used as a channel of communication, transportation and recreational activities, it is also used as a productive space, reaffirming its multifunctional nature. Indeed, main streets, secondary streets, their pavements and even parks, playgrounds and sport areas are used to produce an income by colonias' residents.

7.3.1 The street as a commercial place

The first signs of productive activities at settlement level are located in the main street of the colonias through the development of commercial uses. The main street of colonias is where the public transport route passes by, thus becoming a hub of intense movement of people, suitable for trade activities. Atenas Veracruzana Street, in Colonia Revolucion is one of the most alive streets in the colonias populares of Xalapa due to its commercial activities. In this street, at earlier stages of settlement consolidation most of the buildings were houses, afterwards little by little the front rooms of many dwellings turned into commercial areas. Little by little the front rooms were transformed, doors were broadened, and rooms were converted into different kind of shops, such as restaurants 'taquerias', stationary stores, boutiques, tyre workshops, butcheries, hardware shops, groceries', bakeries, tortilla shops, gifts shops, beauty salons, pharmacies and barbershops. These are either run by colonia's residents or by entrepreneurs who rent the spaces. Street vendors were actually the initiators of the commercial urbanscape of the main street as an old resident describes:

⁷ Aguilar (1990) argues that social transformations due to economic crisis of Mexico are visible in the use of public spaces for economic activities.

⁸ Hiernaux (1991) argues that the proliferation of micro-businesses in the neighbourhood environment is a parallel phenomena to the consolidation of popular settlements



Figure 7.12 The main street of Colonia Revolucion is appropriated as a productive space with the Sunday's tianguis. The tianguis is formed by people from other colonias organized in a group who go around the colonias of the city once a week.



Figure 7.13 On a tianguis' day residents of the colonia take advantage to sell second hand items in one of the streets of colonia Revolucion. Residents and non-residents take advantage to make an income in the productive space of the tianguis.



Figure 7.14 The productive space is not only the space of trade, it is also the space of entertainment and distraction for many colonias' dwellers. People eat, listen to music, meet friends, and often hang around without buying anything.

"They realized about the needs of the people, there were not shops to buy food. They started coming selling food, veggies, and groceries. Later on, they started to sell clothes standing on street corners, and then residents themselves started running a shop, selling vegetables on their pavements. Then later on, other kind of business arrived until the street became a very commercial one!"

(Señora Severa of Atenas Veracruzana Street)

All these activities led to the creation of the Sunday market on Atenas Veracruzana Street which is called 'tianguis'. The 'tianguis' is an outdoor market that usually takes place once a week in every colonia of the city or in a colonia strategically located to cover a group of colonias so there are tianguis the whole year round around the colonias (Figure 7.12). Its origins come from the lively outdoor markets that the Aztecs and other indigenous groups used to have before the Spanish colonization.

As mentioned in chapter four, in Xalapa there was a *tianguis* taking place in its pre Hispanic period. The word 'tianguis' comes from the Nahuatl⁹ 'tianguixtli' which means market. Indeed, it is an element of the Mexican culture that still remains strong, especially in the popular habitat of Mexico, and it is a commercial practice deep-rooted among low and middle income groups. Residents not only go to the tianguis to do their shopping, people also go to the *tianguis* to socialise (Figure 7.14). A wide range of activities take place in the *tianguis*: eating at food stalls, window shopping, hearing music, visiting the fortune-teller, and generally watching the intense activity of the environment. Most of the vendors come from other neighbourhoods; however, the residents also participate selling second hand items such as clothes or trinkets (Figure 7. 13). This represents a good opportunity for residents of the colonias nearby to make an income. They all set up their merchandises in stall, or tables, and metallic structures, and even on the pavement. The tianguis is another urban element which produces and transforms the social and physical life on a daily basis. Commercial, private, public, and domestic milieus are blended in one identity with a non-permanent meaning. There is a great dynamism in the tianguis and every user attributes to it a different meaning, and a different function. These productive spaces enrich the mix of use and multiple functions of the urban environment of the colonias. The result is a dynamic environment with a strong identity which is created by the different strategies of appropriation. Attracted by the dynamics of the commercial street, the colonias' tianguis receive many visitors from the surrounding colonias and even from other areas of the city.

⁹ Indigenous Language spoken by the Aztecs, who controlled Central Mexico until the Spanish conquest. Nowadays, *Nahuatl* has over a million and a half speakers, in central and south Mexico.

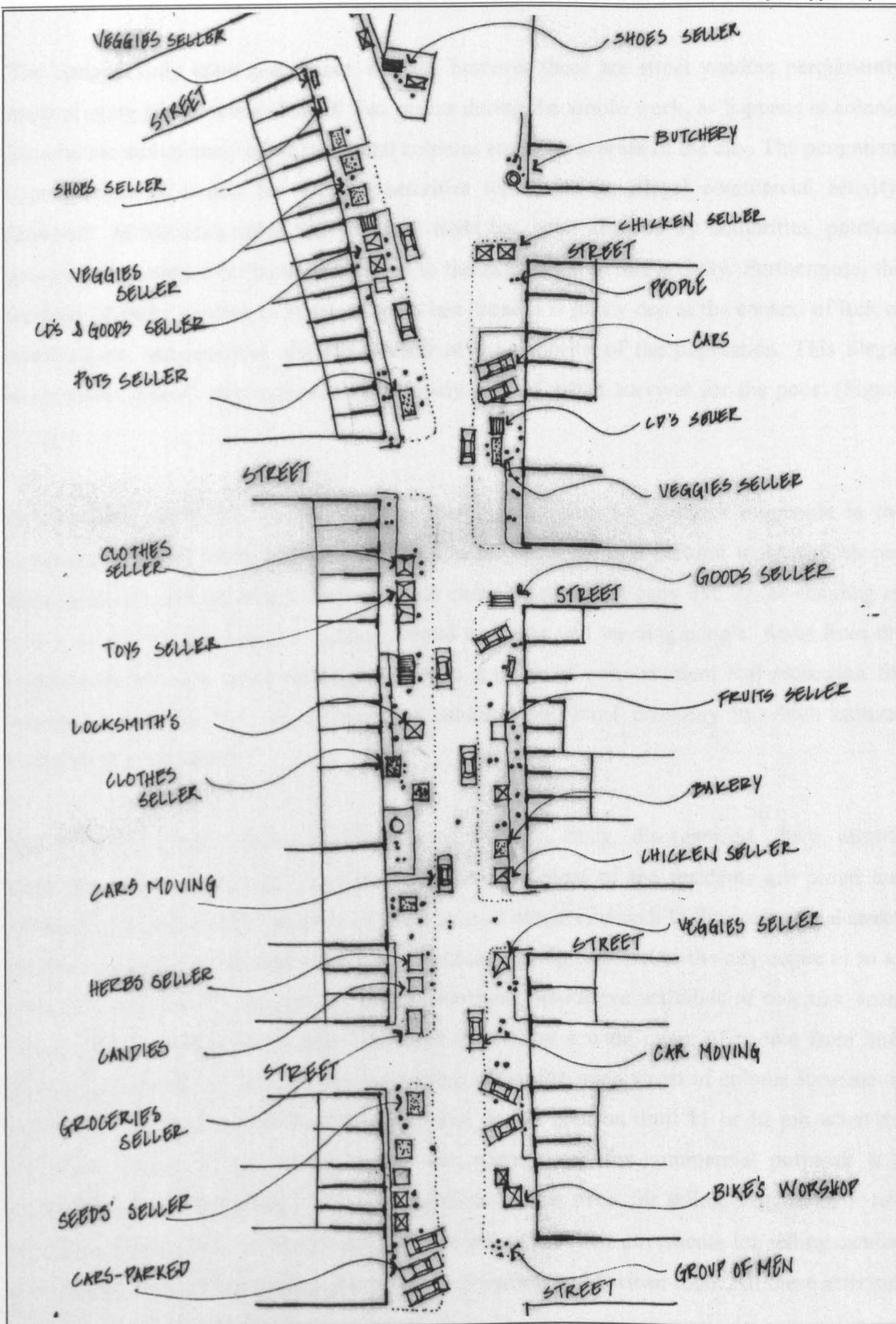


Figure 7.15 Street vendors appropriate pavements and free spaces during the whole week, as happens in the main street of colonia Revolucion. The figure shows a snapshot of the different commercial activities taking place on a weekday at noon. A wide range of street sellers are permanently established along the whole street. On a tianguis day (Sunday) the occupation of the street for these activities significantly increases. Pavements on both sides of the street are totally occupied by the vendors only leaving the carriage way free. See also figure 7.26.

The tianguis only takes place once a week, however there are street vendors permanently appropriating pavements and small free spaces during the whole week, as happens in colonia Revolucion and in many other peripheral colonias and central areas of the city. The permanent appropriation of streets for vending activities represents an illegal commercial activity. However, in Mexican cities this informal trade has been allowed by authorities, political groups and parties, who have contributed to the expansion of this activity. Furthermore, the increase of street vending in Mexico, in the last decades is partly due to the context of lack of employment, opportunities and the poverty of the majority of the population. This illegal commercial uses of streets represents the only way of urban survival for the poor. (Figure 7.15)

In this way, public space represents the source of income for millions of people in the increasing unequal urban Mexican society. On the other hand, a cultural trend also shapes these practices. People like to buy goods at cheap prices; Mexicans like to eat standing or sitting on pavements, and like walking around watching and meeting people. Apart from the commercial activity, street vending represents a place of entertainment and recreation for colonias' residents. It is an activity that enhances the local economy in which cultural practices also take place.

The productive main street is described as liveable, busy, disorganized, dirty, unsafe, unhealthy, noisy, and with heavy traffic¹. However, most of the residents are proud and satisfied of having such a commercial street in their neighbourhood. In the commercial street, people can meet most of their daily needs, without having to travel to the city centre or to an expensive commercial shopping centre². Moreover, productive activities of colonias' main streets usually prolong daily life. The street is used by a wide range of people from both within and outside the colonia. The productive life of the main street of colonia Revolucion starts at 6 am when the tortilla shops open and its life goes on until 11 or 12 pm when the restaurants close. Secondary streets are also appropriated for commercial purposes at a household level. During day time, some residents use the street for selling vegetables or raw chicken on little tables. In the afternoon, some others use their pavements for selling candies and snacks, and in the evening some people sell traditional Mexican food. All these activities

¹ Amante (2003: 299) argues that street vending contribute to urban fragmentation, improvisation, disordered land uses and disordered growth, and urbanscape deterioration.

² Street vending in Mexico has been studying by Cross (1988) with a social, political and economical approach. He states that "we must see street vendors not only as people looking for income, but also as people filling needs and demands in segments of economically polarized societies where formal businesses using the logic of western economic rationality have decided against responding to human needs".

prolong the life of the street until 10 or 11pm (Figure 7.16). Some households occupy the whole pavement with a table and perhaps chairs, and those selling food improvise a kitchen. In some cases, the whole space is occupied, so that even pedestrians have to walk down off the pavement in order to continue on their way. This productive space is not only produced by setting up tables and taking these objects inside and outside the house everyday , but also by permanently setting up metallic stalls which in some cases obstruct the continuity of the pedestrian path. In this way, these elements permanently become part of the colonias' streetscape. (Figure 7.17 and figure 7.18). Commercial activities are more often seen in paved and consolidated streets than in underdeveloped ones. The fact that transformation and improvement has taken place causes the use of the street to increase as well.



Figure 7.16 Residents using pavement to sell, candies, clothes, and groceries, transforming the public space temporally by taking out a table, an umbrella or even a little roof during day. At night, some residents also take out a table to sell traditional Mexican food.

There are more pedestrians and residents use the public space more intensively when a street has been developed. All these aspects encourage residents to take advantage of the improved street and to use their immediate public realm to produce and generate an income by transforming the pavement on daily basis. Señora Rafaela of Paseos de Xalapa Street in

Colonia Revolucion affirms *"Now that I have my pavement, I think I will sell tacos here, so I can pay my share of the pavement construction, otherwise, it is going to be hard"*. Again, the public space is transformed through diverse uses and acts of habitation according to resident's needs. Residents take advantage of the benefits of transformation, transforming the space through different expressions and actions that define and redefine the public space, and eventually shaping the everyday physical character and identity of the popular environment of the street.

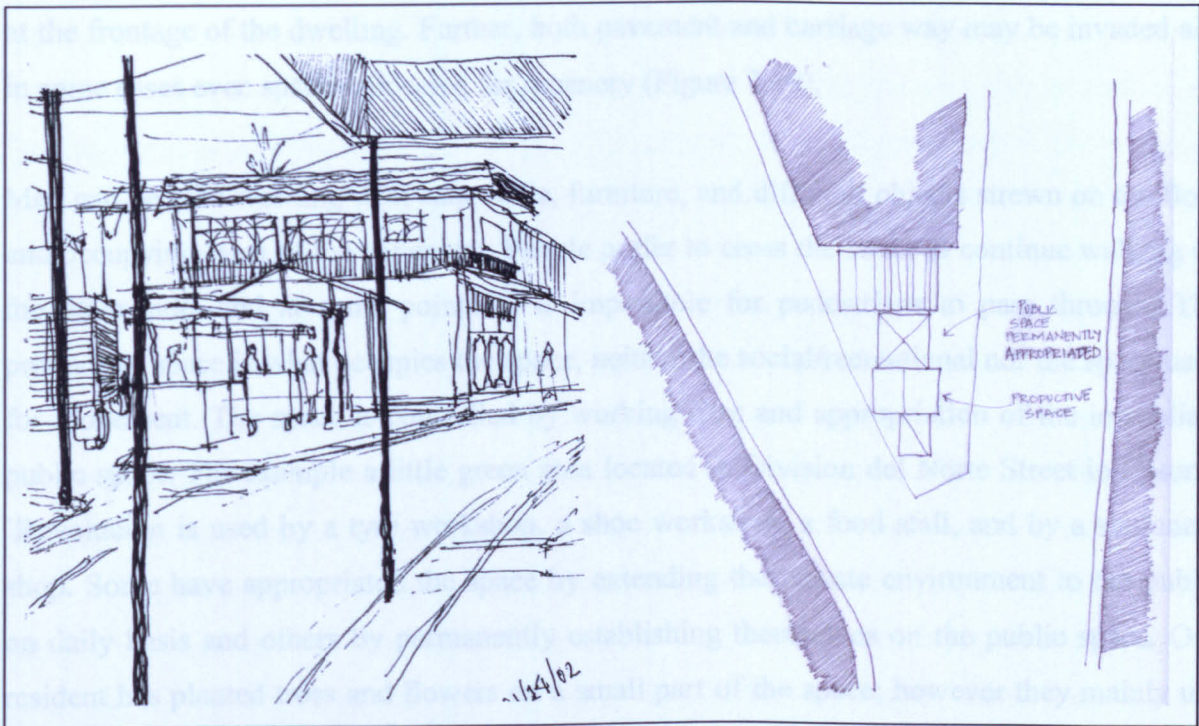


Figure 7.17 Appropriation of a street corner for productive activities in Colonia Tres de Mayo

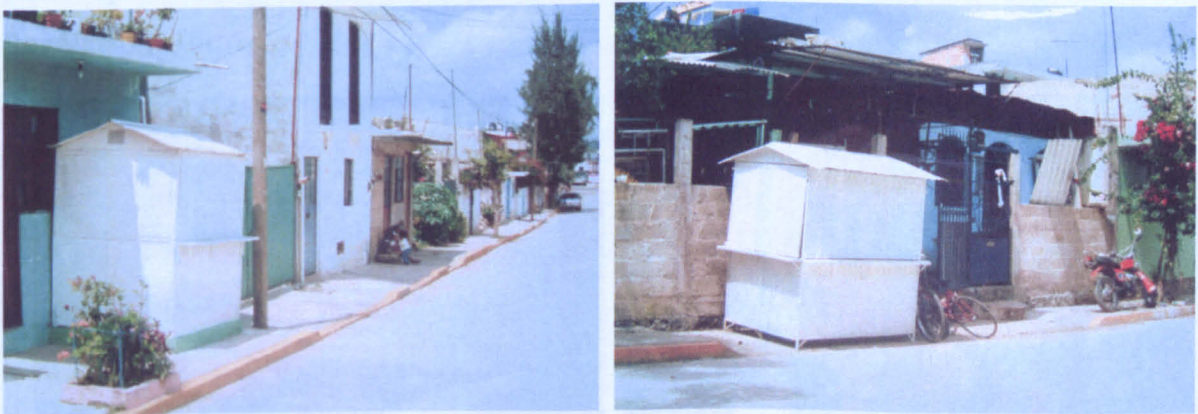


Figure 7.18 Permanent appropriations for productive activities. Some residents have appropriated their pavements permanently by setting up metallic stalls to sell food, mainly in the evening. They appropriate almost the whole pavement in front of their dwelling, obstructing the pedestrian path.

7.3.2 Street as a place to work

Colonia's streets are not only used for selling food or candies. During the day, while walking on the streets of the colonias, different kinds of people can be seen working outside their dwellings. These include panel beaters, mechanics, blacksmiths, upholsterers and carpenters. Through people's actions on the street much can be learnt about the population, and their skills and knowledge. Working activities of this kind, take place in both improved and unimproved streets, whereas selling food activities are much more common in improved ones. The development of working activities takes place through the appropriation of the pavement, at the frontage of the dwelling. Further, both pavement and carriage way may be invaded and in some cases even spaces allocated for greenery (Figure 7.19).

Men can be seen working with cars, tools, furniture, and different objects strewn on the floor and occupying most of the pavement. People prefer to cross the street to continue walking on the other side, and at some points, it is impossible for pedestrians to pass through. The productive space is what occupies the space, neither the social/recreational nor the space used for movement. The space is controlled by working uses and appropriation of the immediate public space. For example a little green area located in Division del Norte Street in Colonia 'Revolucion is used by a tyre workshop, a shoe workshop, a food stall, and by a stationary shop. Some have appropriated the space by extending the private environment to the public on daily basis and others by permanently establishing themselves on the public space. One resident has planted trees and flowers on a small part of the space; however they mainly use the space for work. The residents see the space as a means of income production rather than a public space for recreational, ecological or social purposes as Señora Guadalupe of Colonia Revolucion affirms:



Figure 7.19 The street is also used as space to work, where different working activities are carried by mechanics, panel beaters, mechanics, blacksmiths, upholsterers and carpenters. They also appropriate a great part of the pavement.

"[...] The same people living here use the space in different ways, one with a tyre workshop, another one with a shoe workshop, I imagine they thought – the space is available let's use it. We have to take advantage don't you think? As I am saying, that's the way it all started, people started to set up their things, one started his little business with the tyre workshop and then the others and so on [...] the space was supposed to be a green area, it would be nice [...] with plants, pavement [...] But we all have to live is our work..."

7.3.3 Sports for an income

The previous sections discussed how the productive spaces have been created on the streets. It is also interesting to note that spaces allocated for recreational purposes have also become spaces to produce an income. For instance, in spaces used for football matches, residents in charge of the tournament organization charge a registration and a weekly fee to each team. This payment allows teams to play in the tournament and to become part of the colonia's league. There are usually one or two persons in charge of the sport court. According to the person organizing the football tournament in Colonia Revolucion, the money is spent on paying the referees and buying the trophies. In some sport courts they also spend money on the lighting of the court such as in Colonia Tres de mayo. However, this activity is not very well perceived but the majority of people. The group of people who organize the matches are regarded as profiting and the wider community argues that not all the money is spent in running the tournaments. Residents suggest that quite a lot of money goes to the manager's pockets. There are a lot of teams and it is believed that it is impossible to spend it all on running the matches. The managers are therefore seen as taking advantage of the space by satisfying their private interests. This explains why in Colonia Tres de Mayo those opposed the development of the park were advocating for the permanence of the football court, as discussed in chapter five. Those involved in running the football matches were not only defending the space for recreation, but they were also defending a source of income.

7.3.4 Vending in Neighbourhood Parks

After improvements have been made in neighbourhood parks they also begin to be used in ways that generate income for individuals. Some residents living nearby or in front of these spaces have also set up tables to sell candies to people visiting the park. This usually happens in the late afternoon and evening. In Jovita Park, Señora Jovita (the main promoter) takes out a table with candies every afternoon. She sits on one of the corners of the park just outside her house. People stop to buy sweets and other different items, and some neighbours stop to talk and gossip with Jovita for some minutes. Others even sit outside with her to chat for a long

time. This corner of Jovita Park, a part from being a productive space, becomes a social space in the park. Another similar example is found in Villahermosa Park, where one of the residents involved in the improvement and management of the park sets up some tables and improvised plastic tents outside the park's entrance to sell candies and food to visitors in the afternoon on daily basis. (Figure 7.20)



Figure 7.20 Neighbourhood parks are also appropriated for vending activities. Outside Jovita and Villahermosa Parks, residents set up tables to sell candies to visitors. This space, apart from being a productive space, becomes a place for meeting and gossiping in the neighbourhood environment.

The same kinds of activities are observed in other public spaces around the colonias such as in Solidaridad Park in Colonia Revolucion. Residents living around the parks, regard these places as an opportunity to generate an income from children and visitors. Furthermore, the existence of neighbourhood parks has also encouraged residents to go beyond a simple table and transform the front part of the dwelling into a space from which to generate income. This is observed in Solidaridad Park and in Villahermosa Park where some households living around the park have widened their doors to adapt their front room into a shop. A Shop owner living in front of Solidaridad Park said: *"At the beginning, I used to sell only sweets to children, to keep busy myself and make some extra money, then afterwards I opened a shop, and it is being successful mainly because of the kids"*.

The table or the shop in the front room, apart from being a source of income represents a place for meeting, and social activity which reinforces the use of neighbourhood parks and playgrounds, and enhances the vitality of the public realm. Some other people, external to the colonia, also try to make an income in busy parks such as in Jovita and Villahermosa Parks as street vendors visit the parks to sell candies. Due to the high number of visitors, Villahermosa Park has been the target of many people selling within the park; however the residents in

charge have not allowed this, because they believe “*it is a park not a market*”. They recognise the need of street vendors for the vitality of the park; however they also embrace the nature of the space being used mainly for recreation. They therefore exercise control and create the identity of a place for play and entertainment rather than a space of productive nature.

7.4 Celebratory Public Space

As discussed in chapter two, public space is shaped by the ideological, political, technological and cultural expressions of those who inhabit it. Public spaces are where the ordinary needs of urban socialization take place. Along the consolidation process, public spaces have also been used as a place for community meeting for discussing the different issues related to organization, defence, and development of the neighbourhood environment. Moreover, public space periodically also becomes the setting for meaningful events where cultural beliefs are disclosed either individually or collectively. Therefore, from daily activities to annual celebrations, residents and non residents built up the identity and meaning of the space in the colonias (Hernandez 2002). The celebratory space identifies the members of a social group, relocating it in time and space as a differentiated collectivity, and therefore reinforcing the groups’ identity (Calvo 2001). In this section, acts of celebration, commemoration and festivity that take place in the colonias’ public milieu will be discussed. These are special occasions that may be established in the year’s calendar or events that may take place only once in the life of the people from the colonia. Nevertheless, they represent episodes of life which imprint meaning, memory and identity to colonias’ public environment (Figure 7.21). In this way the space is transformed through acts of habitation, and through practices which shape the physical and social space and disclose the local aesthetics, the need of celebration and the construction of the identity of a group. These are social transformations of a space which construct places, shaping their character, revealing people’s cultural practices, as well as showing the organization and links among neighbours.

7.4.1 A setting of commemoration

The street is the prime public space of the colonias. It is usually the setting for different kinds of celebrations. Streets are the setting for national, and religious holidays, and for residents’ parties throughout the year. Streets are easy to appropriate for a birthday party or even to fully appropriate to the point of closing it for a Christmas or New Years Eve party or for

honouring the patron virgin of the country (Guadalupe Virgin). Unimproved streets are the easiest to appropriate to become a celebratory space since they are used little by vehicles. Usually, residents' birthday parties start in the private environment and spill out to the street especially when the space of the house is insufficient for the guests. Improved streets are also appropriated in very special occasions which involve the entire community. According to the kind of celebration, streets may be transformed by decorations that the residents put up on the facades, windows, and lamp posts.

One of the most important celebrations which takes place on the street and which represents great significance in residents' life is the celebration of improvement and transformation. Right after the end of the construction work, when the street is ready to use, residents usually organise the 'inauguration party'. Residents and local authorities gather to celebrate the new street, pavements and carriage way. Residents organize themselves to receive the local authorities with traditional Mexican food and even music, such as mariachis. The street is also decorated with ropes of balloons and coloured papers hanging from the roofs of the houses and crossing the street from one side to the other. This is a way to thank the authorities for having heard their petitions, and eventually helping residents in the street improvement. Material consolidation of the street is culminated and reinforced with the social and collective fabric, represented by the celebratory public space. The public space of the street represents the final stage of the urban consolidation and that is a very powerful reason to celebrate. Everybody cooperates because they know a celebration is for the wellbeing of the street. All these practices also reinforce community coherence, sense of place and the collective identity. This celebration symbolises the result of a successful interaction between the stakeholders in the production of the public space. In contrast, in streets where conflict and fragmentation coloured improvements' organization, celebratory space may not take place.



Figure 7.21 Celebratory spaces. Residents' parties such as birthday's parties take place on Saturdays and Sundays on the streets in both unimproved and improved streets. According to the importance of the celebration the space is transformed by people, space, artefacts all making celebratory space.

7.4.2 The street as a sacred space

The street becomes a sacred space when residents use it to celebrate their religiosity; their more intimate beliefs are uncovered where personal and social boundaries diffuse in those special religious dates. Relph (1976) defines sacred spaces as one of archaic religious experience; it is continuously differentiated and replete with symbols, sacred centres and meaningful objects. These spaces are special events that involve the collective sharing of a common faith and sentiments. The street and the space around is transformed into a sacred space with shrines. Sacredness, however, lies not in the physical place alone but in the significance that people assign to it. 'Sacredness' is a human designation, and even here we find a range of meanings (Berleant 2003). Sacred space is an honoured one. It is a space full of signs, symbols and images, where people through their actions make tangible and visible their culture, traditions and beliefs. The sacred space created by the residents strongly contrasts with the public space of indifference, conflict and defence which is constructed by the material production of public space (Chapter five). Once again the changeable nature of public space is redefined through peoples' practices.

In streets where residents have built shrines, the street is transformed into a celebratory space. Little Shrines ('capillita' in Spanish) build collective identity through a common religion, and create a place that promotes social interaction, a place to decorate together, and a place of collective celebration. This is a place decorated with flowers, candles, religious images, colours, and materials. It is not static, not only does it change according to the religious calendar but it also transforms on daily basis through the religious practices of the passers-by. Mandoki (1998) argues that these daily practices defined places in another sense. These represent the symbolic order through which people experience places as being charged with specific personal or collective memories, stamped with emotional, historical, and material meaning. The street and its shrine is indeed a place for worship, full of many different meanings, on which residents express their beliefs, cultural values and traditions. For example in Carlos Segundo Street, Señor Jorge and his compadre (see chapter 6) after building the shrine, organize the Guadalupe virgin celebrations every year on December the 12th. Residents usually start decorating the street and the shrine the day before with balloons, flowers and coloured papers. In the evening of the 11th of December residents gather to sing the traditional Mexican birthday song called "mañanitas", and to drink and eat traditional food. The next day they organize a mass on the street, in so doing the sacredness is reinforced

by inviting a priest. They set up a table in front of the shrine, and come together to practice this catholic religious rite. Afterwards people drink, talk and stay in the street sharing with neighbours. Later on the everyday rhythms of life continue in their normal flow. The street and the shrine remain decorated, and these signs and symbols communicate to strangers the celebratory sacred dimension of this place (Figure 7.22).



Figure 7.22 Celebratory sacred spaces. Public place is transformed into a sacred space, materially and symbolically by the religious actions of the colonias residents. Celebratory space becomes a space of ritual, solemnity and communion.

7.4.3 Partying in neighbourhood parks

Neighbourhood parks are also places of celebration. Parks are places where people do many different things; where spaces may be marked out imaginatively, for different events and engagements and memories (Crouch 1998). Parks become the setting for all sorts of celebrations. One common celebration that happens in most of the colonias parks and playgrounds is the children's day party on April the 30th. This happens in Jovita Park (Colonia Revolucion), Villahermosa Park (Colonia Ferrocarrilera) and Mascarenas Park (Colonia Los Pinos). In Jovita Park, this celebration took place even before the improvement and

transformation. Since then, Señora Jovita even hires a clown to entertain the kids. Residents organise themselves to prepare food, and cakes. In addition Jovita decorates the space with a Mexican flag. Jovita and the residents usually organise the children's party inviting the kids of the colonia with fliers and posters on the streets. In some occasions, they have tried to get help from authorities and politicians to get gifts for the children as well. In this way the open space had acquired its definition as a community public space even before significant improvement. Material public space *per se* may not have been present yet; however the uses and appropriation of people already provided it, with its public and collective quality. From the beginning, Jovita organised children's parties in order to motivate the children of the colonia to continue participating in the improvement of the area and to promote participation and positive space appropriation. Parties continue to take place in the improved public space. Now the space and its physical qualities define where people gather, and where the clown gives the show. In the past, before the transformation, people would gather in the middle of the space. After the transformation the show takes place on the stone paved area where benches are located. The new furniture and pavement have changed the site where the activities take place. Now, the physical elements support the celebratory space (Figure 7.23).



Figure 7.23 Parties taking place in the neighbourhood communal space. The first picture shows a celebration in Jovita Park at earlier stage of consolidation and the second one the same activity is taking place but now supported by the physical public space. (Photographs provided by Señora Jovita Rodriguez.)

In Mascarenas Park, residents also organise the children's day party. In this park the space is also transformed for this special occasion. They set up colourful plastic covers to protect themselves from the rain. They organise a theatre play in which the children and residents can participate. They decorate the place with balloons, people bring chairs to enjoy the play, they hire disco music equipment, and break 'piñatas' (a suspended decorated pot filled with sweets to be broken by kids in parties). They also bring cakes and food for everyone. People from other peripheral colonias (mainly from colonias where neighbourhood parks or playground do

not exist) come to the space and everybody is welcome. In 2001 the party took place with two purposes one for celebrating the children of the colonia and the other for having successfully defended the space from the threats of illegal invasion. Celebrations are carried out with different meanings and reasons according to peoples' aspirations (Figure 7.24). In Mascarenas Park similar practices take place on some other special dates for the community, such as the national day on September the 16th when residents organise 'la kermes' which is a popular party with dances, raffles, and competitions. Residents transform the space to celebrate the Independence Day, in order to commemorate that they are Mexican. They reinforce their national identity by singing the national anthem and decorating the space with Mexican flags. Through their 'fiestas', as Viladevall suggests, residents enhance the patrimonial value of a neighbourhood, a city and a nation exalting every element that make place possible: including time, space and people (Viladevall 2001:174).



Figure 7.24 Celebratory space takes place in the colonias at different dates during the year. According to the holiday calendar, residents come together reinforcing their group identity in their neighbourhood park such as happens in Mascarenas Park. (Photographs provided by Señora Antonieta Menchaca).

Public spaces in the central areas of the city are often used for cultural and artistic events which are organized by the local authorities. These do not happen in the spaces of the colonias. However residents do promote these sorts of activities in their public spaces. This happens in Mascarenas Park where residents have invited different people to teach the

children painting and modelling twice a month. In Jovita Park, Señora Jovita has also invited people who can teach the children and youngsters about different themes of their interest, which are important for their human development. These examples provide evidence that public space is also a space for culture and education, through creating a space where the community can learn good values, and regarding the space as not only an area for play but also for learning. Cultural and artistic activities take place and are encouraged and promoted by residents, so they bring their neighbours outside to the public. Again it can be seen that these spaces are not only about material transformation, but are also about creating a place for people, promoting activities, keeping the spaces alive, and enhancing community learning.

7.5 Conflicts over use of public spaces

In contrast to the theme of celebratory space, we now move to the different conflicts that take place over the use of the space. Daily use by the wide range of actors provokes different perceptions, attitudes and reactions in colonias' residents. Different questions come out to the public arena; about what is right, and wrong, and about how people should behave in public spaces. In colonias populares, some people view public spaces as a place of freedom, where anything can be done. For others, the space must be controlled and regulated and people should behave in a certain way. As result, the uses of public spaces become a contested arena where those using, protecting and maintaining them compete for the space. The diversity of users claims different territories through different acts and attitudes of use and appropriation; also those in charge of the space react in different ways to these actions and also make a claim for the space and its rightful use. The space of conflict is shaped by different behaviours and by gender, age, group, and culture. The conflict is between users and those managing and taking care of public space. This situation gives rise to a series of frequently competing social interactions of different shades and textures which impinge on the physical and social life of colonias' public space. Moreover, in some situations residents in charge of public space try to find different solutions to avoid conflicts and try transform the space socially and physically in order to achieve the desired public environment. Situations will be described in the following paragraphs.

7.5.1 Conflicts over vacant plots

Several different behaviours which negatively affect residents' life take place during the transformation processes of public space. Antisocial behaviour taking place in unimproved

streets and vacant plots is commonly a cause of conflict in the colonias environment. The public space is appropriated and controlled by antisocial practices carried out by internal and external agents who threaten the social and physical quality of the space. Vacant plots are often characterised by being dirty, full of weeds, and rubbish, and are very dark at night. These bad conditions create a very unpleasant and insecure environment. The spaces are in the right condition to be dominated by littering, alcoholics, drug addicts, and other kinds of suspicious behaviour. Consequently, the public space is appropriated and controlled by antisocial, illegal and unhealthy practices. Under these conditions residents feel intimidated by the quality of the public environment and insecurity prevails in the public space, which negatively affects the colonias' public life. Conflicts are manifested through the continuous threat that this antisocial behaviour represents. For example, the small green area of Zumarraga Street was a place where alcoholic drinkers and drug addicts used to hang around. They continuously bothered pedestrians, and especially women and children were harassed. Señor Jorge, who was the president of the street board, kept confronting these people, as requested by the residents. He tried to throw them out by talking to them, asking them to leave, and when this was not possible by calling the police. These measures were sometimes effective, but frequently were not. This was a fact in the life of the street that made residents worried about their public space, and encouraged them to take control over their immediate environment. Therefore, residents launched different strategies of improvement and transformation, according to the resources at hand. A wide range of strategies to throw out undesirables were carried out such as cleaning activities, introduction of lighting, the construction of pavements, and even the construction of shrines. The problem of antisocial behaviour was not overcome in Zumarraga Street until the street was paved and residents built a shrine for Guadalupe Virgin in the green area, as described in chapter six.

Vacant plots are also commonly used by pedestrians as spaces for throwing litter. This is especially true for those who do not live close to these spaces and come from other neighbourhoods and therefore do not care much about how the area looks. Confrontation has taken place between those concerned with a clean and healthy space and those polluting the spaces. For example in Colonia Constituyentes, the green area is continuously used as rubbish dump where people go to throw rubbish and even throw dead animals, such as cats or dogs. Señor Fernando and the other members of the community board have caught people doing these activities. Therefore, confrontations have occurred. They have argued and the members of the board have told them not to do it. Señor Fernando affirms that people have apparently

understood since the space has been continuously watched, cleaned and improved by them. However, he also states that there are many people who still walk their dogs in the space and leave the dog's dirt. The board considers this to be a serious problem because many children play in the space. They have confronted these people, but without much success. Many people still use the space to walk their dogs without cleaning up their dirt and even tell the members of the board: *"Well if you are so bothered, why don't you come and clean it yourself!"*

7.5.2 Vehicular traffic

Before improvements are made, pedestrians and cars share the same spaces; pedestrians walk in the middle of the streets and cars drive there also. Although vehicular traffic is not heavy, there are cases where drivers do not respect the pedestrians who bring about a lack of control and loss of order over the use of the streets. The lack of physical clues to allocate places to the different users of the street creates accidents and conflicting situations among the different users. For example a fact recorded in various unimproved streets of the colonias is that drivers do not respect pedestrians at all. Pedestrians walk in the middle of street, and are continuously threatened by drivers who want to pass them almost run them over. Street corners are also places of conflict because cars turn without showing any respect to the pedestrians standing there. These actions have also provoked verbal confrontations between pedestrians and drivers. The construction of pavements represents a good solution in order to avoid these conflicts among users of the streets.

Another conflict which takes place right after the construction of the carriage way of the streets is caused by careless drivers who try to use recently improved streets without waiting until the concrete roads have fully hardened. For example in Zumarraga street residents were advised by the local authority that the street could not be used for one month to allow the concrete to reach its full resistance. Therefore they had to take care of it in order to maintain the quality by not allowing any vehicular traffic on the street. The conflicts arose when many drivers tried to drive on the street. Residents had to confront them and tell them not to pass through, but without much success. Frequently drivers did not care about the residents' complains. Therefore in order to avoid these situations, residents watched the two entrances, and closed the street entrances with a rope and had to be always aware of any reckless driver trying to pass through. This was the only way residents could prevent drivers passing through the street and also it avoided confrontations.

Another cause of conflict over the use of streets arises when they have been improved and car traffic significantly increases. Competing practices take place in the use of the public space between children who like to play on the streets and cars. There is a continuous threat in these streets, and in some cases children have been run over by cars. Residents feel threatened by this situation, which has led them to find traffic calming measures such as building humps on the carriage way. Residents do this in order to create a more secure street for their children. Señora Santa of Isabela Catolica Street in colonia Revolucion tells us: *"we now want to meet all together, to decide about setting up some speed humps, because some children have been about to be run over"*. Residents organize themselves to set up a very narrow and sometimes very high concrete humps. They usually build three or even four humps in one street block; one near each street corner and one or two in the middle of the street. Residents manifest their control over the uses of the street, and try to avoid conflicts between cars, pedestrians, and especially children by providing a solution to slow down traffic. This is a very effective solution because car drivers try to avoid driving through streets with humps.

7.5.3 Pavements as a parking space

Another common attitude which may cause conflicts between neighbours is about the use of pavements as parking areas. Many residents do not have a garage, and where possible, they park their cars on pavements, thereby obstructing the paths. Many residents resent this and it has provoked verbal confrontations among them. On one hand there are residents who regard the pavement as a parking space, for protecting their cars; on the other hand other people regard the pavement as the pedestrian space. There are different views and perceptions about what the space is for, who it belongs to, and how it should be used. The way all these issues are perceived by users of the space influence the way they appropriate it. These different views create contested spaces in the streets of the colonias. There are residents who think that pavements should not be used as parking spaces and take this as a serious problem and try to stop these practices. Señor Lucio of Colonia Revolucion argues: *"I have fought with my neighbour, he parks his car on the pavement and does not allow anybody to walk on, this is not possible, the pavement is a public space for people to walk on not to park cars"*.



Figure 7.25 Residents using their pavement as a parking space obstructing pedestrian paths, but protecting their vehicles.

Furthermore, there are some cases in which pavements are used not by residents, but by visitors to the street. A resident, in order to avoid, this happening on his pavement decided to build raise concrete flower bed, like the ones described in chapter six. This resident found an effective solution to those uses affecting his immediate public space against his interests (Figure 7.25). In contrast to this resident who is opposed to others using pavements as a parking area, some others have even covered the pavement gardens with concrete so to be able to park on it. This happened in Zumarraga and Pascos de Xalapa Street. In the construction of these streets, strips for pavement gardens were left, however some residents did not want to have the strip so they covered it order to have a free pavement to park the car. In this way the car would be more protected, secure and closer to the dwelling (Figure 7.26). There are different perceptions about these practices, some residents feel affected by another's actions and complain, which leads to confrontation and even the fragmentation of social relations among neighbours. However often residents do not say anything, in order to avoid conflicts with their neighbours.

7.5.4 The street is not a court!

It is not only drivers who create conflicts about the streets, but teenagers appropriating the space to play football are another cause of conflict among residents. It is often a generational conflict, and caused by competing views between adults and the youth living in the street. This happens in Pedro de Alvarado Street in Colonia Revolucion where the youngsters like to play football on the street but damage the plants and flowers of the residents who like to take care of the pavement gardens. Moreover they play without any care and hit cars, facades, doors, and windows. Different reactions take place, for example some women go out and take the ball away from them arguing that *"the street is not a place for playing football, you should all go and play somewhere else"*. In doing so, the youngsters are sometimes excluded from

the street by the adults. Sometimes youngsters stop playing to satisfy the adults, but some other times they do not care and continue playing. When the researcher visited this street, there were teenagers playing football. These actions have provoked conflicts between adults and youngsters, and tensions between the adults as well. Señora Reyna states: *"I have fought with them already; I have told them that there are sport courts in the colonia. I have told my son that the neighbours complain because he destroys their plants"*. Discord is created by different groups who each claim a territory; for youngsters the street is the space where anything can be done, and for the adults the street is the space where youngsters cannot play. Adults want respect for other users and residents. In this way public space becomes a contested space. For young people the street represents a stage for performance, where they construct their social identity in relation to their peers (Malone 2002). In Pedro de Alvarado Street, youngsters do this by playing football. However, many of the identities that young people adopt within the public domain are contradictory and oppositional to the dominant culture (Malone 2002).

7.5.5 The obstructive productive space

The productive space of the street of the colonias is another issue that may create conflicts over use. This can take place where residents use the space to work, such as mechanics who occupy and obstruct the whole pavement and therefore do not allow pedestrian to pass by. Some residents resent these practices which provokes confrontation between those wanting a free pavement to walk on, and those using the space as a place of work. A Resident of Pedro de Alvarado Street of Colonia Revolucion affirms:

"The mechanics work on the street and that is not good at all. There are many who obstruct the path, they park cars, people cannot pass through. We have to step down off the pavement to continue walking. I have fought with the mechanic already, asking him to take away his old crocks"

Often, efforts to prevent these practices are in vain, because those using the space for work, often do not care about those who complain. These are often unresolved conflicts over use. Residents against these practices can do very little about it. This issue rather depends on the sympathy of those obstructing the space to those complaining. In contrast, there are residents who accept these activities in their streets and do not see them as very problematic or who try to avoid conflicting situations by not saying anything. Some other residents think that there is no other choice because people have to work and make a living and the street represents an

instrument to develop productive activities. Whatever the position, the fact is that pavements are appropriated in different ways by different users. These activities are different from the common uses of pavements and when these are perceived as wrong, conflicts may arise.

The commercial space of the colonias is another one that may cause conflicts especially in the productive space of the tianguis. Even though the commercial space is identified as a progress in the colonias' life, the commercial street such as the Atenas Veracruzana Street is also perceived as an uncontrolled space, "a no-man's land and claimed by everybody" (Riaño 1990:224). The commercial public space is the space of economic production and consumption, the space of transportation, and the space of recreation and entertainment. All users claim the space in different ways at the same time, which provokes conflicts over use. Street vendors in association with authorities have become the 'owners' of the public space, and they usually neglect residents and shop owners. Street vendors claim a space to make a living; shop owners claim their street frontages; pedestrians claim a safe place to walk on; and vehicular traffic also competes for the space of movement (Figure 7.26). The result is a contested space in which competing uses and practices take place. In Atenas Veracruzana Street many street vendors have had confrontations with shop owners, and even with the authorities allowing these uses. These discussions are about the rights that each actor claims to have over the space. Although these confrontations have often taken place, most residents and shop owners have got used to living with these uses. Most shop owners and street vendors have even reached agreements about how to use the street and pavements so each of them can share it. For example street vendors may respect shop entrances to allow customers to pass.



Figure 7.26. The conflictive nature of the productive public space. Vehicles, pedestrians, and vendors compete for the space

Pedestrian routes on a 'tianguis' day are fully blocked by street vendors, so pedestrians have to walk on the carriageway, using it as well vehicles which often results in accidents. In this sense the commercial space also has a contested nature. Cars and pedestrians have to share the same space which provokes conflicts over use. Pedestrians have to be very careful in the *tianguis* not be run over by cars. The commercial space results in difficulties for participants but at the same time it is enjoyed. It is a symbol and a place of progress, but at the same time is disordered and disorganized. Even though residents see it as a good asset in the colonia environment, they believe that something should be done to reorganise the street vendors and the traffic. However residents think that this is something that only the local authorities can do.

7.5.6 Conflicts over use in neighbourhood parks

Antisocial practices and behaviour also take place in neighbourhood parks. One of the main motivations for transformation is an idea that having an improved public space, especially in vacant plots will curtail antisocial behaviour. However there are cases where vacant plots which have already been transformed into neighbourhood parks have also been appropriated by antisocial behaviour. The promoters of development and permanence struggle with the different practices and actions affecting the life in neighbourhood parks. They confront people who mistreat and damage the physical and social life of these spaces. Conflicts arise between those under the banner of 'protection' and 'right use' of the space and those not willing to follow rules of communality. For example, in Solidaridad Park, Señora Yolanda and the residents struggled a lot after their improvements to keep the gardens in good shape. Many people used to pull out the plants and flowers and in this situation Señora Yolanda would tell them not to do it, which usually led to confrontation and conflict.

Not only are issues about plants and gardens a matter of confrontation between abusers and managers, but equipment also raises difficulties. The misuse of playground equipment is a very common aspect of confrontation. This situation takes place in most neighbourhood parks, where adults and adolescents use equipment which is only suitable for young children, and some times even vandalize and destroy it. Again this provokes situations where opposing interests and cultures clash in the public space. Answers such as: *"Is this space yours? Are you the owner? The park was built by the government, we can do whatever we like"* - have been heard by those promoting maintenance and permanence. In addition, in some cases even physical confrontation has taken place.

Teenage students from the nearby schools are perceived as the main abusers of neighbourhood parks during the day. Older residents argue that they do not know how to take care of the assets they have in the colonia and that they are careless. Students who come to the parks after school usually throw rubbish, damage the plants, and misuse the playgrounds and they even paint walls or equipment with graffiti. These actions may some times be intentional but mostly are careless and over excited teenage behaviour. In the evening, late at night neighbourhood parks have also been places for drug addicts and alcoholics who are usually youngsters and young adults and who also tend to mistreat and vandalize the spaces. Riaño (1993) found in the spaces for sports in the Ecuadorian popular settlements of Quito that sport areas in the neighbourhoods were mostly appropriated by men to bet and drink alcohol. This contributes to the detrimental image of the public spaces. At night, promoters of the space do confront abusers however they are afraid of delinquent behaviour, and instead they call the police who are more effective in removing them. These abusers may come back to these public spaces; and the effectiveness of these measures depends on the consistency of residents in watching the space. This is a serious issue which residents may avoid in their neighbourhood parks by excluding the abusers, but these measures may not solve the problem in a wider sense. Abusers may move to another street, green area or neighbourhood park, and the problem has only shifted to another public space.

There are also conflicts between groups who are differentiated by gender over the daily use of sports courts. Male youngsters appropriate the spaces and do not allow women to use them. There have been cases, such as in Solidaridad Park in Colonia Revolucion, where men have hit women with the ball in order to throw them out from the space and allow the men to play. Eventually women leave the space fighting and with a great frustration of not being able to use the space any more. This has excluded women from sport areas as happened in Solidaridad Park. Women argue that they do not visit this space because *"men feel they are owners of the spaces"*. Moreover in these spaces where playgrounds and sport courts are located next to each other without any protection, youngsters hit children with the balls too. Children playing in playgrounds are usually in danger of being hurt. This is also the case of Solidaridad Park, and in other parks of the colonias this situation is also observed. This usually happens due to deficiencies in the design and allocation of spaces for users of different ages.

As an answer to antisocial behaviour, the main promoters of neighbourhood parks have encouraged residents living around to be the park's watchers to prevent any disturbances. For example in Jovita and Mascarenas Parks children have called themselves "the guardians of the park". In Villahermosa Park the resident selling candies at the entrance of the park is always looking after the proper use of the park. Señora Jovita is also watching the park every afternoon while selling candies too. Moreover in all parks residents living close by are constantly watching the park to prevent any social and physical disturbance.

Another way of controlling mistreatment is by setting up signs. They can be made of paper or metal, some are very simple and others are highly elaborated. Signs are set up around the space; at the park entrance, and on the playground equipment as done by the promoters of Villahermosa Park. They have set up different signs conveying different directions about how to behave in the park, thereby controlling people's behaviour in the space, and inviting people to take care of the plants, trees, and equipment (Figure 7.27). In this way, the managers of the park have achieved a mutual understanding with most users. They argue that at the beginning they really struggled with vandalism and antisocial behaviour and that is why they decided to set up signs. Señor Modesto of Villahermosa Park affirms:

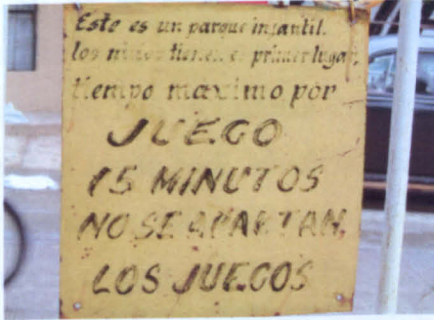
"We tried very hard, struggling, fighting, lots of fighting, many people got angry, they were not from the colonia, they usually told us – is the park yours? Then, why don't you close it? And we answered them, we are not fighting because you come to the park, we are fighting because you are destroying it, the place is not for destruction"

The managers of Villahermosa Park have successfully controlled and moulded peoples' behaviour. Both park users and managers have reached a common understanding about what is right to do in the park and about how to use it and behave in it to foster a socially and physically healthy public space. This strategy has been observed in other parks of the city such as one located in a more central neighbourhood in Xalapa. In this case the control is done through signs, not only by saying 'do this or do not do that' but promoters have tried to encourage people to take care of the park with poems. This is another way of saying – "*take care of the space, and keep it clean...!*" Signs and symbols and the meanings they convey are determined by peoples' knowledge, culture and aspirations for public spaces. These are powerful in avoiding conflicting uses in the neighbourhood parks of the colonias.

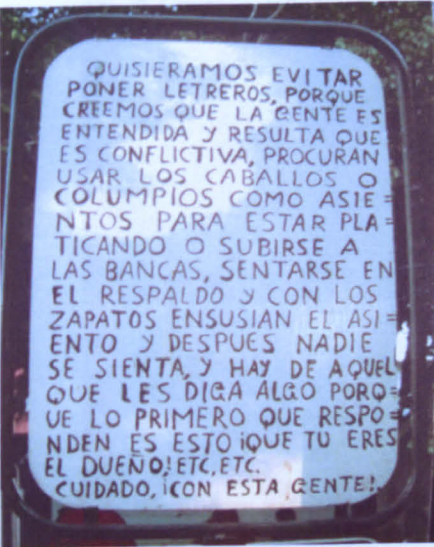


Forbidden

The access of drunk people, or drinking or smoking in this place, because, these activities are bad examples for children.



This is a children's parks. Children are the priority. Maximum time for game 15 minutes. Games must not be reserved.



We would like to avoid setting up signs, because we think that people understands. But they turn out to be conflictive. They use the horses or the swings as seats for chatting.

People sit on the back of the benches and put their feet on the seats and with their shoes the seats get dirty, then after nobody can't sit on them. Ah! If somebody tells them not to do it, this is the first they respond: Are you the owner?!

Etc. etc.

careful with this people!



Notice

It is not allowed to bring dogs, to play inside with balls, ride bicycles, or sell inside the park.

Parents take care of your children, here there is a lot of danger

The entrance is free
Thanks

Figure 7.27 Controlling space. Different signs were set up by the residents in charge of Villahermosa's Park in order to control the uses of the park and avoid conflictive and negative appropriation of their public space.

Another very common strategy to protect neighbourhood parks in the colonias is surrounding the spaces with fences. In the colonias, the need for protection of the public space is always expressed by the promoters of public spaces. After having experienced invasions and illegal appropriations, fences mean protection and security for the colonias residents. In those spaces which are not fenced residents often argue that the setting up of fences is necessary in order to avoid conflicts over use. Through fences and gates, residents control the neighbourhood parks at night so as to avoid antisocial behaviour and protect the space. For example, in Villahermosa Park, residents open the park at about 10 am and close it about 9 pm. In Colonias Unidas Park in Colonia Tres de Mayo, managers open the space at 9 am and close it at 7.30 pm. In Jovita park, which is also fenced, residents used to close it in the evening too, however nowadays, antisocial behaviour in the evening has been overcome and residents have decided not to close it. (Figure 7.28)

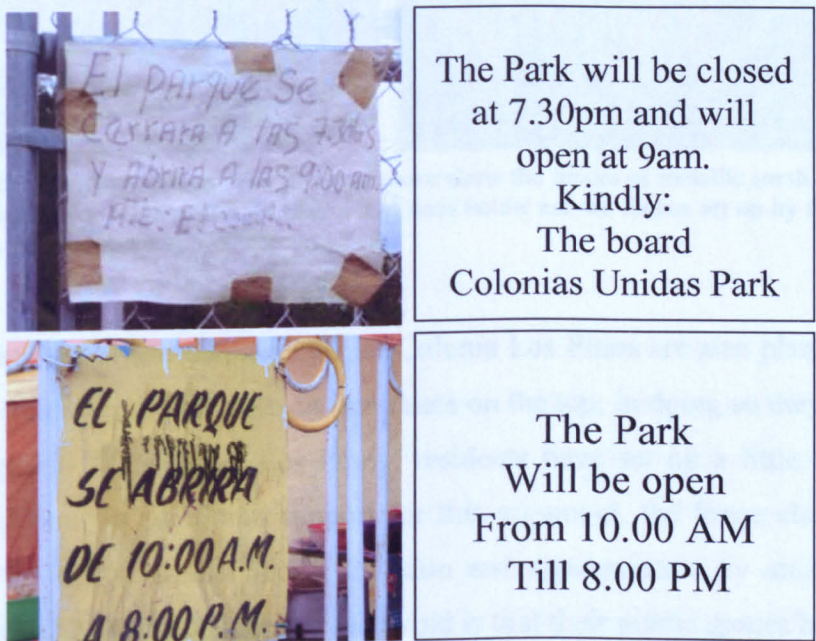


Figure 7.28 Timetables in neighbourhood parks. Residents have controlled the uses of the parks by setting up timetables and closing the parks at night.

In the parks which are improved in partnership with the local authorities fences are built with metallic wire mesh, however this kind of material is very weak and gets broken easily. This kind of fence has been destroyed by vandalism in most parks around the city. In Jovita Park and in Villahermosa Park many vandals have tried to destroy it or climb up it. Residents have been constantly watching and trying to prevent these actions. Jovita and Villahermosa Parks are some of the few places where this metallic fence still survives. As mentioned in chapter six, in Villahermosa Park, the main promoters have changed the wire mesh for a very strong iron fence to provide more security and protection for the park (Figure 7.29).



Figure 7.29 Fencing spaces. The pictures above show the fences of metallic mesh installed by the municipality in Colonia Tres de Mayo. The ones below are the fences set up by the residents of Colonia Ferrocarrilera in Villahermosa Park.

The main promoters of Mascarenas Park of Colonia Los Pinos are also planning to fence the park with a medium brick wall with an iron fence on the top, in doing so they will control and protect their park. Temporally, Los Pinos' residents have set up a little wooden fence to protect the children. In additional support for this argument, the fence also symbolizes the protection of the space against illegal invasion and appropriation by alcoholics, and drug addicts (Figure 7.30). What residents try to avoid is that their public spaces become as Crouch (1998:156) argues, 'a space of conflict, confrontation between different groups especially after dark or outside time when other groups may be there'.

Fences are an effective way to control the use of neighbourhood parks at night and to therefore avoid antisocial behaviour. Most residents think fences are necessary to maintain these spaces in good condition. Fences strongly impact on the public nature of these spaces and that is the objective sought by residents. To some extent however these spaces lose one of their essentials characteristics of public space which is 'free access', and their public nature is reduced. These spaces look over controlled, and visually their fences have a very strong impact in the urban landscape. They are indeed very effective in preventing antisocial behaviour.



Figure 7.30: A wooden fence was temporarily built by residents in Mascarenas' Park. They are planning to build a permanent fence of masonry and iron for better protection

All the issues mentioned in the previous paragraphs raise different question about who has the control of public space? How it should be regulated and controlled and who should be given priority of use? Is it control an important aspect in the management of public spaces? In Chapter two, the theories about public space control were discussed.

The conflicts discussed here show that it is important to reflect on what Lynch mentions: *"The continuity of any human*

society depends on good control of its living space but responsible control is also critical to the development of the individual and of the small group" (Lynch 1981:220). When managers of the spaces do not exercise a responsible control conflicts also arise. This will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

7.5.7 Exercising control

Conflicts about the way managers control the public space have also taken place in neighbourhood parks which has also led to different conflicts among neighbours. Those in charge of the transformation and later the maintenance, have in some cases exercised excessive control, with the objective of protecting the social, spatial and physical life of the public realm. In Colonia Revolucion a resident taking care of a little public green space, decided to fence it with a metallic wire mesh, not allowing pedestrians to pass through any more. His argument was that the main purpose of the fence was to protect the plants and flowers. He told the community that they were allowed to pass through but first they have to ask for permission. In this way, the resident in charge would come and open the door for them. This situation provoked conflicts between the resident controlling the space and the rest of the community. This led to a confrontation among neighbours as people sometimes did not ask for permission to pass through the space. These actions often ended in verbal confrontations between the resident protecting the spaces and those who wanted to use it. These confrontations were about the right to use the space and the right to protect it. Residents felt that privatization and illegal appropriation was taking place and they would not allow it. In this case, residents went to the municipality and explained the situation. Eventually this resident had to take the fence away allowing people to use the space freely

again. A resident living nearby states: *"He did not allow anybody to go pass through or even get close to the space, he was over protecting it, and then people thought that he wanted to seize the space"*

Another case of conflict about control is illustrated in Solidaridad Park, where Señora Yolanda (the main promoter) did not allow children and youngsters to play in the park after 8 pm or early in the morning because of the noise they created. These users were usually harshly thrown out by Yolanda and the group of residents supporting her. Moreover, if the youngsters remained in the park after 8 pm. Señora Yolanda would call the police, so that officers would come to take them out. Youngsters were usually blamed for drinking, drug consumption and antisocial behaviour. Indeed the space was appropriated late in the evening by these antisocial practices which intimidated other users. However, often kids and teenagers causing no trouble were also thrown out from the park. Eventually, residents succeed in excluding antisocial behaviour in the space but also provoked that many other users to stop visiting the park. Nowadays, few children go to the playground and only a few youngsters play in the basketball court, so the space is often empty and abandoned. A resident living next to Solidaridad Park says: *"The playground used to be full of children, but now not many people come to the park because we threw them out so many times"*.

In the previous cases the exercising of excessive control was about regulating the uses and maintaining the spaces. In the case of Solidaridad Park and the little green area of Colonia Revolucion, what was under threat was the access to the space where some users were excluded. Therefore due to different interests, conflicts and clashes between the users and managers appeared. Those in charge of the spaces tried to impose their individual or private concerns, controlling the spaces with attitudes that did not represent the collective interests. Habermas states regarding this matter: *'public space is guarded from intrusion by private interests, a process which is regarded as essential for the health of the society'* (Habermas 1989 in Madanipour 1998:85). What Habermas says is relevant to the case of Solidaridad Park, as private interest should not be allowed in the management of public spaces, otherwise the liveability of public space is under threat.

In the area in front of Jovita Park on Pedro de Alvarado and Isabela Catolica Streets, the president of the community board uses the park for his hens which have eaten the grass and have destroyed all the gardens. This has provoked discontent in the wider community which

feel that the space is over controlled by this person who is acting as if he was the owner of the space. Confrontation and clashes between neighbours have also taken place here, as Señor Lucio tells us:

“He feels he is the owner of the space, I have fought with him, the space is full of hens, there used to be grass, there is nothing now! Besides, he does not allow children to cut the fruits of the trees”

Another case of excessive control was about to take place in Villahermosa Park. Some residents, due to the success of the park intended to get involved in the management of the park, having as a objective to charge and entrance fee for access to the park. In so doing the space would become like a private park. In this case, these residents were ignored by the main promoters, who always kept in mind that one of the main qualities of the park was that it be accessible for all. Moreover, the promoters regarded the park as a space mainly for the entertainment of the poor

Control of the use of space is an important aspect for the community life involve in public space. Those involved in improvement, transformation and maintenance argue that in a public space such as a park control must exist. This involves control of practices, of use of playgrounds, of use of sport areas, and control of the maintenance of the park and control of those exercising management. A resident involved in space confrontations argues: *“All public spaces of the city centre are respected because there is control and rules to follow, why not in the public space of the periphery?”* Those promoters of creating permanent features struggle to keep spaces in good condition. They argue that there is a lack of education about how to use and how to behave properly in public, and a lack of respect for others. Education is also necessary for those managing and controlling public space uses; too much protection creates an idea of privatization of the space. Those taking care of parks sometimes seem to forget that the space is public and that it should be treated and controlled in light of its public nature. The character of publicness of these community spaces is challenged by those who over-control the space to the detriment of the community. Freedom in public spaces is one of their inherent characteristics. An urban space which is freely used and which provides the chance of interesting encounter is an invaluable asset for the development of any community. However, freedom must be negotiated, and users and managers should find a common understanding that brings about both freedom of use and also respect for each other's rights. Lynch and Carr (1990:415) describe this balance as ‘negotiating acceptable divisions of ground, providing

the subtle markers that allows groups to find their places, teaching tolerances to those who operate the space, and controlling unobtrusively are keys to free use'. This means responsible management and responsible use. Moreover, in this control and use both managers and users should keep in mind that public interests must come before private interests; this is a key for successful public involvement as it allows permanence and liveability of public spaces.

7.5.8 Spaces of indifference

Chapter five discussed the different organisational aspects affecting the improvement and transformation of public spaces in the colonias. Different issues were identified such as apathy, indifference and individualism, and lack of attachment to the public environment. These aspects provoke community fragmentation and therefore the abandonment and even the disappearance of public spaces. As a result, the few public spaces that exist in the colonias on the margins of most cities in Mexico are abandoned and dilapidated. The incapacity and lack of resources of local authorities to pay attention to the public spaces is tangible in most colonias. Small green areas, sport courts, playgrounds are generally seen with uncut grass, old and broken benches, and damaged furniture and equipment. Further, in many cases people living near these spaces do not pay attention to them either. The cases of improvement and transformation we have been studying in this thesis are exceptional examples of people's involvement. However it is evident that even in these places there is a general disinterest to get involved in the maintenance of public spaces. As mentioned in chapter five, very few people participated in transformation and improvement processes, and those interested struggled to find support from the community and local authorities. This, in many cases, brings about discouragement, frustration and eventually the abandonment of public space. In addition, the appropriation of land through antisocial behaviour, by drug abusers and drinkers may also take place. Hence, the lack of quality, well kept spaces motivates antisocial behaviour which also affects the social environment of the colonias. Moreover, the lack of public spaces deprives the community from the opportunity of getting a collective education, and learning social and community values.

Public spaces in the colonias have even become spaces of stigmatization. There are some residents that regard green areas and parks as places which are always appropriated by antisocial behaviour, abandonment and insecurity. They argue that green areas and neighbourhood parks are not necessary in the neighbourhood environment, instead housing or

some other sort of facilities should be built³. Señora Maria Paz of Colonia Revolucion thinks in this way:

“We don't want green areas or parks, what for? They are just spaces for youth gangs and they use them to consume alcohol and drugs. Nobody cares about those spaces, really, it is better to have something else; we don't want parks or green areas here”.

This argument is worrying as indifference towards public spaces has reached such a point that some people are unable to recognize the significance of public spaces for their neighbourhood environment. This is an important issue to take into account when considering the permanence of public space, and public participation in their development.

7.5.9 Maintaining the public

Fortunately, there are the good examples of involvement in the public spaces that have already been examined. Villahermosa Park represents a significant example of the commitment of the main promoters to the maintenance of the space. In this park the main promoters have always been enthusiastic throughout many years, and have a strong sense of responsibility to keep the space in good condition. This contrasts with other cases where after some years the promoters have abandoned their activities in the maintenance and management of the space as happened in Solidaridad Park. Villahermosa's managers clean the space, sweep it everyday, and paint benches, playground equipment, and fences regularly. These actions together with responsible control have achieved a very successful, frequently visited, and well respected public space. Jovita Park has also been maintained by the main promoter and her followers, who have also been committed to paint the playground equipment, the benches, mow the grass, and clean the space on a daily basis. They have also been regularly lobbying the local authorities to get help with the different kinds of maintenance. The space has survived for ten years already, although, ups and downs in maintenance have been observed. For example, uncut grass has been seen sometimes, but generally the park is kept in a good condition.

Mascarenas Park is also well maintained by the residents, especially by the children who also clean the space on a daily basis. In this park is still difficult to assess the maintenance on a long term basis due to the short life of the park. However, the park so far is being very well kept by

³ Gomes (2002:34) in her research in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro (Brasil) tells us a similar story. Firstly, favela residents are more concerned in using the free open spaces for housing to satisfy the high demand, and secondly, residents argue that public spaces for sports are appropriated by delinquents and can become places for drug consumption therefore becoming unsafe and useless.

the residents. For example they hire a gardener once a month to mow the grass. In Colonia Constituyentes, residents have even bought a mower to cut the grass in their green area. It is important to remark that in those spaces where residents pay attention to the maintenance such as in Jovita, Mascarenas, or Villahermosa Parks, the spaces are very well used, as visitors have realized that the residents are protecting the spaces and taking care of them. This encourages people to visit and positively use the spaces. These are spaces that show that there is somebody taking care of them, this encourages users to contribute to the maintenance of the parks by acknowledging the efforts of the community. This relates to what Appleyard (1979) has pointed out; 'the environment serves as a social symbol that communicates important meanings which users and non-users interpret' (cited in Francis, 1987). Visitors obviously interpret the maintenance in a positive and welcoming way.

Neighbourhood parks have been maintained by the commitment of those involved in defence, improvement and transformation. However, they also get discouraged by the different conflicting uses, practices and situations that take place in the life of the parks. After the improvement carried out by the municipality, Solidaridad Park was very well maintained by Señora Yolanda and the small group of women supporting her for around six years. However due to the lack of support from the local authorities, and the different kinds of confrontations with users, residents, and youngsters, they stopped taking care of the park. Later on, residents agreed that each household living in front of the park would be in charge of maintaining the section of the space in front of their dwelling. The result is a fragmentation of the maintenance of the public space by creating micro-territories of maintenance. Today, some areas of the park are well kept and some others are abandoned. There are residents who are



Figure 7.31 Fragmented Maintenance. A resident and her children are cutting off the grass only in the area in front of her dwelling in Solidaridad's park. On the background the long grass will remain.

committed to maintenance and some others who do not care at all. For example, the basketball court is maintained by the group of boys who play in the court everyday, on the other hand the playground is all run down and has uncut grass because is in front of the house of a resident who does not care about the park at all. This kind of situation also takes place in other neighbourhood parks and gardens in other colonias (Figure 7.31).

Local authorities show very little interest in maintaining the public spaces of the neighbourhoods of the periphery. They only have resources for maintaining the big urban parks, squares and plazas of the central city, and the planting located in the main avenues. This absorbs most of the labour and economic resources available. Therefore, the public spaces of the colonias are hardly maintained at all by the municipal gardeners. The exceptions are parks which are given maintenance once a year as a result of the continuing petitioning by promoters to local authorities until something is done. Nevertheless the general perception is a lack of support by the local authorities concerning the maintenance of public space. Residents argue that the local authorities are only interested in the public spaces of the city centre. These are always very well maintained and municipal gardeners are constantly changing the flowers and plants according to the season, and creating different ornamental designs. In contrast residents argue that the public spaces of the peripheral colonias are only visited by the authorities in the inauguration ceremony. Señora Yolanda of Colonia Revolucion argues:

The parks and the avenues of the city centre are always being protected, well cared for and maintained, but what happens with the public space of our colonias, they never come, we have to be calling them many times, there is not support at all.

Maintenance of the streets is also carried out by the residents. As mentioned in chapter five, before improvement occurs residents often fill the holes in with debris, and carry out different cleaning activities to improve pedestrian paths. After transformation, residents usually maintain the street with their cleaning activities. In many colonias women sweep their immediate public space outside their dwellings and pick up the rubbish on the carriage way. This is observed in other Latin American cities such as Colombia where the first task of many women in the early morning is to sweep the street in front of the dwelling (Kellett 1995:225). In contrast with the green areas and neighbourhood parks which are often abandoned and have few participating in their maintenance, improved streets always look clean a very well swept on daily basis. A greater importance is given to the public space outside the dwelling by the majority of the population. A greater degree of significance and meaning is attached to the street which contrasts with the disinterest shown with spaces, further away such as neighbourhood parks. Furthermore, in colonias such as Colonia Revolucion where rubbish collection services are not provided, residents have to find their own way to get rid of their waste (usually by paying scavengers). In contrast, in colonias which are provided with municipal collection services, streets corners are often full of rubbish. This gives a very bad

image to the environment, especially when the rubbish collectors fail to pick it up for few days which often happens.

7.5.10 The space of responsibility

Who is responsible for the maintenance of public space? Who should assume sense of responsibility of public spaces in the colonia environment? Little recognition is given to the sense of responsibility undertaken by those involved in public space improvement and maintenance in the colonias by the local authorities. Municipal officials often argue that there is very little public participation and that people do not assume responsibility for the maintenance of their public spaces. However, most people in the colonias recognize that they are responsible for the maintenance of their public environment. They recognize that nobody else apart from them is going to take care of their public space. If this is the case why do few people participate in the neighbourhood parks? Something is unclear here, on one hand people recognize their responsibility, yet on the other hand they do not participate. This could be explained on the basis that colonias residents also argue that both local government and the wider society must share the responsibility for the maintenance of the public environment. Furthermore, they also argue that there is very little support, encouragement and incentives from the local authority to maintain the public space. It is important to reassess these positions in order to achieve a real sense of responsibility towards the maintenance of public space from both authorities and colonias residents. Local authorities grant almost no recognition to those practices undertaken by residents such as in Villahermosa, Jovita, Mascarenas or Constituyentes Parks. Moreover, the local authorities have even tried to privatize them by granting the space to individuals. This leads to disappointment for those who participate, and discourages community initiatives, which eventually affects the sense of responsibility, such as happened in Solidaridad Park. The majority of participants interviewed in this research recognised the importance of public space⁴ as indicated in the quotes: *'we need parks'*, *'there are no spaces for children'*, *'there are no trees, and 'There are no places for the youth'*. However, the majority also recognized that both community and authorities should participate. There are many who embrace a sense of responsibility, there are also who do not. A sense of responsibility needs to be promoted, encouraged, supported and redirected towards true involvement.

⁴ The recognition about public space significance varies among cultures for example in a study of public space in Hong Kong (Xue et al). 2001) the majority of interviewees show no concern about public space supply or existence of greenery within neighbourhoods.

7.6 Public space significance

Public space serves and functions in the every day life of colonias residents. So far, the dynamics of uses and users of public space in the colonias environment has been examined. The different conflicts that arise from these uses have also been analysed. Public spaces serve several purposes and objectives in the colonia environment. Improvement and transformation of the public space represent important benefits in both the physical and the social environments of the colonias. Residents attribute values explicitly to their public space and those involved in the processes of production attribute a special importance to public space. Benefits are also observed through changes in public life and daily activities carried out in public space. These are examined in the following paragraphs.

7.6.1 Spatial significance

It is evident that improvement, transformation and the physical configuration of the public space network of the colonias brings about significant benefits to colonias' residents. Residents attribute qualities to public space improvement such as accessibility tranquillity, confidence, security, and cleanness⁵. These qualities were mentioned by the majority of colonias' residents when they were asked about the significance of public space improvement in their daily lives. Residents identified the capability of access to services such as transportation as a very important matter. Tranquillity, confidence and security are qualities attribute to public spaces after their improvement. These benefits are related to being able to walk with confidence without the fear of falling down. The quality of cleanness is another important one. The issue of keeping the home environment clean is important as children who often play outside the house remain cleaner for longer. The great advantage of going out and returning, moving from private to public and vice versa and keeping both environments clean is very significant in the daily lives of all residents.

Most residents, when referring to street transformations, significantly stress aspects related to the physical qualities of the space and the way transformation of the physical public space affects movement. Improvement provides more physical order in the environment where both

⁵ It is interesting to compare our findings with the research of Arefi and. Meyersb (2003) carried out in Visag (India), which is a completely different context, however similar terms are used by people to describe what public space means: "It is characterized most saliently in terms of health, serenity, uncrowdedness, cleanliness and lack of pollution, and for our respondents it is space that has these characteristics. These are the terms by which our respondents assess the availability to them of public space, and these are the terms by which they express their willingness to go there, or their wish to avoid the area." (Arefi and. Meyersb 2003:338)

pedestrians and cars have their own space and both can share the street safely with order. In contrast, residents talk more about social benefits when referring to a park or a playground where everybody can relax, entertain and have a good time. Residents also mention the restorative effects of the space such as forgetting about problems, stress and where and being able to relax.

In the parks of the colonias people look for security, protection, places to sit, and generally a well maintained environment. They also attribute the term of beauty to those spaces where these qualities are fulfilled as well as having well defined pedestrian paths, and gardens where they can satisfy their human needs for resting, relaxation, distraction, tranquillity and happiness. Variety is another quality attributed to public spaces and this is also related to beauty. Variety in the design of the spaces satisfies and fulfils the different users' needs. For example, in Villahermosa Park all users can find a place to entertain themselves, through the variety of objects, games and equipment the space provides. It creates an environment with variety for users and therefore a space offering choices for all, and many evaluate it as a beautiful space by many. Moreover users of the spaces also recognize the environmental significance of greenery in neighbourhood parks as spaces where microclimates are created. This is seen in their descriptions of freshness, shadow, sun, trees and plants. The importance of nature in the neighbourhood environment is cited when residents have defended open spaces from invasion by arguing that green areas for the colonia should be built and trees planted. Jovita and Villahermosa Park have spaces for resting and relaxing that provide freshness for the colonia. Their importance is seen in the following quote: *"They represent the lungs of the colonia"* as many residents have described them. These perceptions of the spaces allocated for neighbourhood parks contrast greatly with the perceptions of the street environment in which residents cover their pavement gardens with concrete. Indeed in the public space of the street concrete represents the beauty.

Even though the few spaces existing in the colonias populares may not be greatly maintained, they are still used by colonias residents. Many children play, adults talk, and everybody watches, eats, and gathers there. Indeed the human needs as described by Carr et al. (1992) of active and passive engagement, relaxation, comfort, and discovery gradually get satisfied along the process of transformation and improvement of the spaces. Certainly, in those streets and neighbourhood parks where successful transformations and improvements have been achieved such as in Villahermosa Park, users of the space are highly satisfied. On the other

hand in other spaces such as Solidaridad Park where there has been a lack of constant maintenance, people complain about the lack of maintenance and the resulting abandonment. Yet those people that complain are sitting in the spaces, talking with friends, or playing thereby fulfilling their human needs of public life. This reveals that the lack of choice of entertainment in the colonias environment makes people take advantage of the very few public spaces that do exist to satisfy their needs. Some times in spite of the environmental qualities that the public space may present.

7.6.2 Social significance

Socially successful public spaces bring to the colonias' environment benefits which are recognized by the residents. It is important to remark that social benefits depend a great deal on the community relations between the residents and their capacity to overcome social problems and fragmentation. The simple existence of the physical space does not bring about social benefits. These benefits depend on individuals interacting with each other, on their capacity to create an integrated social group, on their interacting with the space and their territory, on the establishment of links, and on the creation of a sense of attachment, ownership and positive appropriation. The combination of these aspects brings about successful public spaces. In the paved streets of the colonias, residents have managed to prevent antisocial behaviour such as alcoholism and drug abuse. Antisocial behaviour has left the streets after improvement and transformation have occurred. Moreover, there used to be illegal 'cantinas' (bars)⁶ which were closed and street gangs were thrown out. These improvements in the social life of the street took place after the construction of pavements and carriage ways. Improvements also allow accessibility for the police who now are able to patrol the area on daily basis. Muddy streets are usually much darker and this makes them a perfect setting for antisocial behaviour, and the same applies to abandoned green areas. In streets and communal spaces residents acknowledge that through transformation, people have learnt to respect the spaces. This is due partly to the residents involvement, which shows that somebody is responsible for the public space watching it as Jane Jacobs describes -*with the eyes upon the street*' (Jacobs 1961).

Residents who promote the creation of neighbourhood parks regard their communal spaces as contributing to the solution of many of the social problems impinging on the private sphere of the colonias, such as family violence, social disintegration, a lack of care for others, and lack

⁶ This is also common in popular settlements in Colombia where clandestine bars are also found (Rojas et al. 1997).

of family and community values. Hence actions of improvement and the provision of communal spaces help to create a better society. This is acknowledged by the promoters of public space improvement and transformation. Señora Jovita of Jovita Park, Señor Artemio of Villahermosa Park and Señora Tony of Mascarenas, view their public space as places of integration and inclusion. They comment: *"There is a lot of violence and mistreatment of children in the private environment"*. Furthermore, they regard their public space as a setting where at least these problems are forgotten and left at home and where children play and enjoy time with their parents⁷. The social value of public spaces as a social integrator is confirmed by all the different social practices that residents have carried out in the public space along the consolidation process. A sense of community is created through direct actions of transformation of the space where people get together and share life experiences, constructing not only physical space, but also social space. These interactions create spaces of collective integration where social bounds are reinforced through meeting, eating, partying and celebrating together

Neighbourhood parks in the colonias populares provide spaces for recreation for the poor. The poor do not have the resources to move around the city and find the spaces of recreation that satisfy their tastes as the better off communities do. The poor strive to survive on a daily bases, and recreation is something that comes at a lower level of priority because it is difficult to satisfy their primary human needs. However, everyone has the right and the need for entertainment and a social life. The existence of recreational spaces such as neighbourhood parks and playgrounds are urban elements which contribute to a better human development. Having a park near home is crucial for the family living in the colonia. Many residents of the colonias argue that they hardly ever visit a park or a place of recreation in the central city. Firstly, this is because they cannot afford public transport to get there and secondly because these parks always have a lot of food vendors and children always ask for something such as food or candies which they simply cannot afford. The social benefit of a neighbourhood park in the constraining urban environment of the majority of Mexican city dwellers is of great social value for individuals, families and for community development.

⁷ L'Aoustet and Griffet (2004) examined ordinary actions in a Park in France, they found out that the sharing of places, help bring peers closer together while also bridging the generation gap. Youth are continually learning to live together without really realizing it.

7.6.3 Economic significance

It has been seen how public spaces in the colonias embody an economic dimension which is manifested in different forms in the public sphere and gives the spaces a productive character. In neighbourhood parks, residents have taken advantage of the opportunity of the public space by taking out tables to sell candies or food in front of the parks. The improvement and the construction of pavements and carriage way also give the opportunity to open a shop, take out a table and make an income. Some even transform the house frontage into a space of economic significance. Moreover the *tianguis* in the colonias also provides the same opportunities for residents to make an income, if not on daily basis at least once a week. The economic significance of the public space transformation and permanence in the environment of the neighbourhood is evident through all these practices which residents carry out to enhance their economy within the domestic environment. As one resident said: *"I sell my candies and trinkets on the pavement to make some money, while I am here at home doing all my domestic work"*.

The economic significance goes beyond pavement, street, or park vending; improvement and transformation of public space also means an increase in the value of private space. There is very little evidence and research about relation of public spaces and their impact on property values⁸. However in our case studies, it was found that the majority of the residents of the colonias refer to the increase of their dwellings' value, once the neighbourhood environment is provided with a well consolidated public space. After public space development, improvement and transformation colonias' residents put a higher price on their dwellings than before. The majority now argue that their dwelling is worth much more and they affirm that if they were to sell their house, they would receive a higher price. None of the interviewees was thinking about selling their properties, although the conviction of their having increased in economic status is very strong among colonias' residents. The gentrification taking place in many colonias along the consolidation process is also explained by the improvements taking place in the public realm, and the corresponding increment in property values. The consolidation of the colonia which involves the availability of urban services, pavements, paved streets, and neighbourhood parks, certainly moves the area towards a more urbanized

⁸ Woolley (2003:45) argues that there is very little evidence, and research is needed on the impact that open spaces in urban areas have on a range of economic issues in the urban context. There appears to be no significant research and little written proof in the UK, although there is some from US.

environment and attracts more affluent families who are able to pay the higher costs, that residents deciding to move, put on to their properties after transformation.

7.7 Public space, people and meanings

After examining the significance that public space represents in the colonia environment, it is noted that values arise from those using and producing the spaces. Moreover producers attribute different symbolic meanings to those spaces created by them. In the following paragraphs, the different meanings emerging from public space production and consumption are examined. The idea that “space do not have a mere subjective symbolic meaning; and meanings are also related to material processes” (Gomes 2002:32), will be investigated.

7.7.1 The space of struggle

‘Struggle’ is a word that has been repeated several times in the thesis; however, residents of the colonias populares repeated it many times than it is used in this document. The word ‘struggle’ is the word that all those involved in improvement and transformation have used when they were asked “*what does this place means to you?*”. Struggle is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as a fight in which somebody tries to do or get something which is difficult to achieve. Creating viable public spaces is a struggle for colonias populares residents. Public spaces in colonias populares are very difficult to achieve and to keep alive. Processes of production of the space are carried out in an environment of struggle, competition, conflict, and contestation. Colonias residents struggle for the availability of the land for the public, and then they struggle within the community to generate the interest of the community in their public spaces in order to reach organization and carry out the defence, and the direct interventions needed, and then to promote development. In addition, they struggle with the municipality to achieve the permanent consolidation of their spaces, in an interaction where issues of power, knowledge, culture and capital come into play to dominate the development process and the resulting form of the space. Later on, residents also struggle to maintain the spaces, and conflicts arise over use. Achieving public space occurs through a process which is full of limitations, constraints and barriers, and it embodies a great significance in people’s life. The ingredients for achieving a useable public space are the struggle and hard work of local agents of change. Through struggle residents develop a sense of belonging and attachment, and learn to value their achievements. This is expressed by many as “*all that is difficult to get is highly appreciated and that is why we must take care, if something is got*

without any effort it is difficult to appreciate". Appreciation, a sense of belonging, and an attachment for the public space is what the main promoters have tried to spread, encouraging and motivating the community to positively appropriate public spaces, and always reminding them about the struggle they went through to achieve them.

7.7.2 The space of empowerment

Public space in the colonias and the way it has been produced embodies different educational meanings in both production and consumption processes. Those involved in public space processes regard their participation as an example for the wider community. In many different ways producers of public space have tried to transmit a commitment for public space improvement and transformation. Furthermore they regard their actions as teachings for the younger generation, showing them that things can be changed and they are able to transform the world around them. For example Señora Jovita from Jovita Park and Señoras Vero and Tony from Mascarenas have taken pictures of the whole process of transformation of their neighbourhood parks for two main reasons. Firstly, to show everybody (the community and the authorities) the actions that they have undertaken to protect and improve their spaces, and secondly to show the future generations how the urban environment of their colonias was transformed by their own efforts in order to teach them that they are empowered to solve the problems affecting their lives.

Often popular knowledge is overlooked and popular dwellers can be regarded as unskilled and uneducated, and therefore unable to transmit ideas to the wider community and unable to negotiate with authorities and other agents of development. Having participated in public space transformation those agents of change have learnt how to participate, how to make themselves heard, they have empowered and developed themselves by talking, expressing their ideas and needs, and confronting authorities and powerful agents along the different processes of transformation. This creates an opportunity to learn how to stand up and fight for their rights, needs, and aspirations. For example in Paseos de Xalapa Street in Colonia Revolucion the residents feel very active and great promoters due to the improvements achieved in their street in the last couple of years, the main promoter Señor Humberto described their street as *"the spearhead in the urbanization process of the colonia"*. It is evident that having achieved transformation entails a sense of empowerment for those involved in public space processes. Finally, a sense of empowerment is a key element for the viability and permanence of public space in popular environments.

7.7.3 Educational space

The educational meanings of public space transformation also emerges at this point, since those promoting public space transformation regard their activities as teachings for the wider community and especially for the younger generation. Public spaces acquire its educational dimension, which is essential for its future permanence in such challenging environments. From the beginning of transformation, one of the main objectives to trigger development of public spaces is to create a better urban space for the young, where they can grow up in a safe and healthy environment, as well as learning good civic values. For example, in Jovita, Mascarenas and Villahermosa Parks children have been significantly involved in the transformation process and that is because in all places the main promoters regard the children's involvement as a key element in their childhood development and learning process. For the promoters this involvement means an educational process which creates meanings and values in the life of children. It is hoped that the youth will contribute to the future sustenance of the neighbourhood social life and public spaces. This is demonstrated in Jovita and Villahermosa Park where children were always involved in the improvement of the spaces, and now after ten years the spaces are still in good condition. These children who participated in these processes have now grown up. Having participated represents a great significance in their life experience as seen in these remarks: *"the park represents my childhood"*, *"I learnt the significance of park"*, *"I felt what means to have a park"*, *"It is our space"*, *"I met my friends here"* (Martin and Miguel Angel Barrientos). As children, they proclaimed themselves the *'guardians of the park'*, as young adults, they still care about the spaces, promoting and encouraging the good use, positive appropriation and respect for their communal assets, and transmitting what they were taught to the new children of the neighbourhood. This is crucial factor in the maintenance of public space, not only in the colonias' environment, but also at city level. Those who participate in the past as children are now engaged with the spaces as adults, promoting vitality and permanence. Moreover, through the facts and daily actions of transformation, and the protection against illegal appropriation, antisocial behaviour and disturbances, the main promoters stress the importance of the spaces, which educates children in favour of the future public space.

In the case of Mascarenas, through unity and mutual help in the transformation of the space and overcoming threats and achieving defence, people have learnt to live in community. They have become a group, and have created a sense of community and a viable public life,

which enhances traditions, social interactions, culture, and group identity. In so doing, people shape themselves as individuals and groups, related to their space and concerned about its future. Transformation process also bring about learning what to value, and creating positive meanings and long term positive appropriation which grows through close relationships with the immediate environment. Therefore having been involved in these processes signifies life experiences which are deeply attached to the physical space. Educational public space generates meanings and symbolisms and creates long term attachments and a sense of belonging which eventually influences public spaces' transformation and maintenance. Señora Tony of Mascarenas Park remarks that *"all this (transformation) is an experience of life, a teaching of communality and responsibility for the children"*. Señora Jovita states *"living together in harmony is the only way to teach children to be good citizens"*. These previous examples contrast with the case of Solidaridad Park where children and youngsters were not involved and were later thrown out of the park. This affected their attachment to the place and eventually brought about the neglect of public space.

7.7.4 The space of patrimony

Patrimony is another meaning that public space represents for the residents of the colonias populares. In fact, adults are encouraged to carry out improvements and development in order to leave a better living space for the younger generations⁹. Public spaces are an inheritance that will remain for future generations, and that is why protection and maintenance and involvement of the young are essential elements. The space of education gives place to the space of continuity thereby creating its patrimonial meaning. For residents of the colonias, the meaning of inheritance is regarded as one, which will remain from generation to generation; therefore public space survival depends on children, grandchildren, and the future generations. This will only be possible if children are taught how to care about their surroundings. Residents refer to this as *'creating a chain'* of responsibility from father to son and from son to grandson and so on and so forth; this maintains permanence and continuity by showing to others that people are concerned about other people, about the space and about the future of the society. Soon those who carried out transformations will be gone, however the transformations remain for new people, children, and families and that is why agents of change strive to create the betterment of their domestic environment with quality and long lasting public spaces. This is demonstrated through the discussion taking place between

⁹ These findings are similar to what Giglia (1995) found in her research about the appropriation of public open spaces in a low-income neighbourhood, located in the periphery of Naples (Italy). Residents of new social housing states carried out interventions in open spaces to play football thinking on their children.

authorities and residents about the materials for the construction of the space as discussed in chapter five. Local authorities usually try to build with very cheap and low quality materials which residents resist. In so doing, colonias residents strive for an urban environment that shows that somebody is concerned about the neighbourhood space and somebody took care about the quality of the transformation and the improvement for the future generations.

7.7.5 The space of urbanity

In Latin America the dominant image of rural life is negative (Rapoport 1985:270; 1982:144). The natural, rural negative world 'monte' is contrasted with the positive, progressive urban world of 'cultura' and the two worlds should be separated by a clear boundary (Kellett 2000). Such meanings are disclosed in public space consolidation process. The consolidation of the neighbourhood environment of colonias is carried out having as its image and model that of the 'urban'. Muddy open spaces full of weeds and uncut grass are described as 'monte' or 'rancho' (ranch) with a tone of discomfort and shame, and this are related to the rural life. The fact that streets get paved, pavements constructed, and vacant plots built as playgrounds and parks with the characteristics of the consolidated city is seen as becoming urban, belonging to the city, and importantly leaving behind the rural character of the neighbourhood environment. Moreover, as discussed in chapter five, colonias' residents do not find any other material suitable for improvement and development apart from concrete, which is desired for long lasting improvement. Concrete symbolizes progress and prosperity; it is the material of the 'urban'. A dwelling built with a concrete roof is seen as achieving an urban lifestyle and similarly concrete streets and pavements mean the same. Through concrete pavements, carriageways and streetscapes the environment acquires beauty, centrality and integration.

The transition from rural to urban should be also accompanied with the transformation of daily practices. Often residents refer to actions and practices of the rural environment as a constraint in the advancement towards urbanity. –“*We do not live in a ranch anymore*” is often heard. The world of the 'rancho' connotes rural life, dirt, underdevelopment, ugliness. Together with the transformation of the physical space, daily activities should also change according to rules of urbanity. The recently paved street or park implies a separation with practices such as having animals outside, as we saw in the park located on Pedro de Alvarado Street, where residents are discontented with a resident having his hens in the gardens. Some others associate walking in the middle of the street as a practice of the past, as a practice of the 'rancho' where there are no pavements, and no streets. Besides, those who are indifferent

to participate in the improvement and transformation of public spaces are branded as people who like to live in the mud, people from the 'rancho'. In contrast, some others see the urban transformation as a social order, where now the urban space offers the physical qualities for ordered movement; therefore people have to behave according to the rules of urbanity.

Alvaro Fernandez (Fernandez 2001) a colonia dweller of Xalapa wrote in 'Diario de Xalapa' (the local newspaper) a description of the transformation of his street after it was paved;

"Jorge Cerdan Street [...]we know it from its beginnings, first as a path among the coffee plants, afterwards as a country road, later on as a street full of stones and holes with mud and dust [...] we got our street paved, surrounded by trees and flowers. Many times I did faena to refill the holes and to be able to go through with my car. Jorge Cerdan Street now changes its physiognomy [...] now it is a cheerful environment".

Becoming urban means leaving behind the rural past as Alvaro expresses; leaving behind the countryside world and changing the character from the muddy country path to the urbanized paved street. Moreover, achieving paved streets means becoming urbanized, and being able to go through by car. This is what beauty and a 'cheerful environment' means for him. Moreover, he writes *"citizens should be very conscious and respectful with the street, and should not throw fruit peel..."* hence Alvaro also encourages a change of behaviour avoiding practices from the rural world.

7.7.6 The public face and the self

The façade and street frontage is the public face of a building, and it is this frontage that we show to others in public as if it was our own face. The immediate public space outside the dwelling also acquires a particular meaning in the colonias. The street and its pavements are the primary public space, the most used and the best maintained, and most residents work hard to get it improved during the consolidation process. The efforts residents allocate in street improvement is directly related to what this space means to them. The space outside the dwelling represents an extension of the home environment. The immediate outdoor space represents similar meanings to those attached to the frontage of the house in which self-builders disclose their attempts for differentiation of the self from others, by showing different values of power and prestige. This can be at various levels of improvements, even paint as Klaufus said: 'painting the façade is an extremely successful way of acquiring prestige' (Klaufus 2000: 344). In the previous chapter, this is evident by the way colonias' residents extend their façade architecture to the pavement by personalising it with different objects like

tiles, flower pots, and benches. Pavements are built for protection and security but also for aesthetics. Behind these actions, pavements and the frontages represent the self. Alvaro Fernandez (Fernandez, 2001) states: *"the street is everybody's home, the street where our house is located is the extension of our home"; the street expresses somehow what we are;* – *'our physical, psychological and spiritual integrity somehow is reflected in our street'*. Any improvement outside of the house represents residents as humans, persons and citizens. The way it is cleaned and well kept represents the self, who is the dweller in the neighbourhood. The front of the house reveals his/her identity and how this is presented to others. As one colonia dweller states: *"what ever we do for our frontage talks about us"*. This explains why the pavement is the first public space to be improved. It is the public space closest to home. Moreover, it is the immediate public space which represents the mask that the urban dweller shows to the group he or she belongs to. It is the boundary formed by the façade and the road. The pavement signifies as Robert Ezra Park states 'the conception we have formed of ourselves –the role we are striving to live up to -this mask is our truer, the self we would like to be' (Park, 1950:250 in Madanipour 2003). The urban space represents the public mask that the popular dweller shows to the community. The different levels of settlement configuration and consolidation represent the conception that people have formed of themselves, the role they are striving to live up to, and the kind of urban environment they would like to achieve. In this way the popular urban environment is the mask that dwellers try to show in the social context they are immersed in. They acquire a position in the neighbourhood environment, and more importantly in the city and in the social structure of the urban society. One resident states: *"I don't feel ashamed to say that I live in Colonia Revolucion anymore, in fact many of my friends didn't want to come here to visit me"*. It is clear how transformation enhanced the resident's public identity, confidence and his position in the society.

7.7.7 Naming spaces: creating places

In chapter six, we studied how residents visualized landmarks and elements of identity in their built environment in which people represented memories, culture, traditions by creating elements of identity and symbolism in public spaces through shrines and memorials. However residents also try to imprint identity and collective memory through those less tangible elements that create places, such as names. Meaning is attached to public spaces through the names that users call a public space. These are usually related to memories and to life experiences which bring about the creation of meaningful public spaces. In Colonia Revolucion, the name of 'Jovita' for Jovita Park was decided by the residents in honour of the

main promoter of its development. For the residents this name involves remembering the person who promoted the progress of their public space. The name depicts an event, a fact, a person, and an image which the community wants to remember, and identify with, and represent their collective memory. In Jovita Park, people discussed the name of their space, some people wanted to call it “Caritas Sonrientes” (Smiley Little Faces) some others “Parque Dia del Niño” (Children’s Day Park), however these names did not mean much for them. The name of the person who encouraged children and the community to transform their colonia environment was the most powerful, and eventually the majority voted for the name of Jovita. (Figure 7.33)

Naming spaces with words defines the symbolic nature of the place through establishing a mutual interaction between people and space, which is a crucial in the development of the public realm. The case of Jovita Park shows how important names are as elements of identification of place and in creating identity, symbolism and reinforcing the collective memory of the group who created the public place. This is confirmed later on by the struggle residents went through to defend the name they have chosen from the authorities who, after having intervened in the improvement and transformation decided to change the name of the park for “David Ramirez Park” in honour of a bright intellectual of the city. Residents did not know this person; and they could not accept the fact that the name of the place would be changed. People got very angry and they complained strongly. The local authorities even intended to set up a plaque with the new name, but the residents did not allow it. They even threatened the authorities, arguing that if they put the plaque in the park, they would break it, so the authorities backed down. Legally the park is called David Ramirez Park, however everybody knows it as Jovita Park, in spite of what it was imposed by the local authorities the residents keep the name they have chosen. Neither identity nor collective memory can be imposed on a social group. The built environment and the intangible elements that complement its symbolic value and character are intimately entwined with the people who produce and consume it. Meanings are defined along the path of public space transformation. Meanings are created through the interaction of persons and the environment through which individuals and groups reproduce their social and symbolic identity in the public spaces of the colonias. Symbolism and identity cannot be imposed.

Por la Labor de su Precursora, el Parque Infantil de la Colonia Revolucion se Llamará "Jovita"

El parque que al principio se pensaba llamar "Caritas Sonrientes" muy probablemente se denominó "Parque Infantil Jovita", como reconocimiento a la señora Jovita Rodríguez, quien ha hecho mucho por la creación de esta zona recreativa para los niños en la colonia Revolución de esta ciudad.

Jovita Rodríguez señaló ayer que están en espera de que la señora Sonia Sánchez de Chirinos tome posesión en el DIF estatal para solicitarle su aportación, "ya que la gente que aquí vive es de escasos recursos.

Las necesidades son varias, ya que ahora buscan colocar bancas y ponerle protecciones al parque, así como andadores. Al momento gracias a la aportación de los vecinos, los niños ya tienen 6 columpios.

Dicho parque se localiza en la colonia Revolución, entre las calles Pánfilo de Narváez e Isabela Católica.

Indicó Jovita que el municipio solo y únicamente les ha ayudado con asesoría técnica (fueron arquitectos) por lo que en otra forma por ahora les dijeron que no hay presupuesto.

Los colonos han hecho una votación para denominar al parque, hasta el momento yendo arriba el nombre de "Jovita" con 87 votos, por 47 sufragios para que se llame "Caritas Sonrientes" y solo 25 votos a que se denomine "Parque Infantil Día del Niño".

Ayer por la tarde, Jovita y los vecinos se dedicaron a hacer faena, colocando pasto y flores en esa tierra que es muy buena.

Lo justo es el sitio se llame como su precursora: "Parque infantil Jovita".

Due to the work of its promoter, The children's park of Colonia Revolucion will be called "Jovita"

The park which was going to be called 'Smiley Faces', now it will be probably called 'Jovita' in honour of Señora Jovita Rodriguez who has worked a lot to create this recreational area for the children in colonia Revolucion.

Jovita said yesterday that they are waiting for Senora Sonia Sanchez de Chirinos to take over at DIF to ask her contribution "because people living here are poor"

There are various needs. Now they are after setting up benches and protections as well as paths. At the moment, thanks to the contributions of the neighbours, the children already have 6 swings.

Jovita pointed out that the municipality has only helped with the technical advice, they have told them that at present there are no resources.

The colonos have voted to name the park. So far, the name of "Jovita" is ahead with 87 votes, then with 47 votes is the name of "Smiling faces" and with only 25 votes the name of "Children's day"

Yesterday in the afternoon, Jovita and her neighbours worked in a faena, planting grass and flowers.

It is fair that the space is called as its promoter "Parque Infantil Jovita"

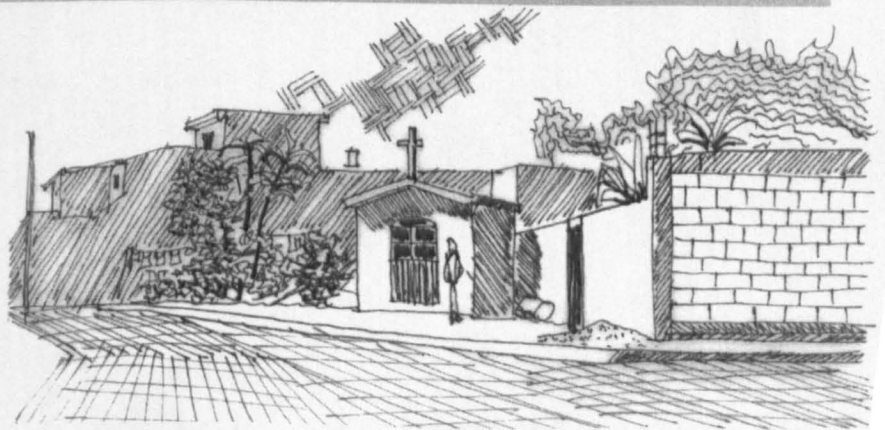
Figure 7.32 Naming spaces. A newspaper article provided by Jovita in Colonia Revolucion which depicts part of the transformation process of the space and the naming process that residents carried to name the park as Jovita. Later on the authorities failed to recognize this name.

7.8 Conclusions

This chapter has examined the consumption of public space, emphasizing the functional, spatial and symbolic roles of public spaces within the colonias' public life. Public space in the popular habitat has different and multidimensional faces. Its character is defined by the myriad of tactics of use and appropriation performed by groups and individuals in order to satisfy their human needs. Public space plays a functional role in which people satisfy their daily activities of movement and socialization, public space also has a productive nature in which people enhance their economy, and finally public space is a celebratory one, through which people reinforce their individual and community identity, creating spaces which reinforce the sense of community, and the sense of place and belonging. In this way, public spaces in the colonias populares are spaces of vitality, dynamism, and multifunctionality,

qualities which are frequently at risk, and often disappear in most contemporary urban environments. Improvement and transformations are crucial in the life of colonia residents because these interventions facilitate public life. However, public spaces in the popular habitat not only acquire their significance with the simple provision of a physical space, they also acquire their public quality and significance through the spatial and symbolic dimensions performed by their users daily, weekly, monthly and even annually. However public space is also a conflictive one in which different users, groups and individuals try to control the uses of the space in which users compete to dominate the kind of space, and the sort of uses that should take place. Conflicts affect public life; however conflicts in public space also enhance their dynamism, and eventually encourage participation. People's participation in public spaces is essential for the permanence of the space. Furthermore, it is through the conflictive nature of public space that residents value and apprehend the significance and meanings that public spaces plays in their lives. The urban environment of the colonias is an environment of challenges and constraints (social, political, economical) which impinge on the every day life of inhabitants. In these scenarios public space plays a great role in the development of healthier and more sustainable communities. In the following and concluding chapter, the discussion will be continued about the significance and meaning of public space in the popular environment, and the different issues of production and consumption will be linked with the different theories initially discussed in the thesis.

Chapter Eight



Conclusions

Conclusions

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8.1 Introduction

In chapter two of the thesis, the theoretical and conceptual framework examining public space transformation processes in the popular habitat was built up. In the following chapters the empirical research explored how processes of transformation of public space take place in the colonias of Xalapa. The insights gained from the empirical chapters helped to support and clarify the theories and concepts introduced initially. This final chapter firstly attempts to draw together the empirical and theoretical parts of the thesis. Secondly, it discusses the most relevant findings of the research, and where appropriate these are supported by certain theories and conceptualizations relevant to our findings. The chapter then moves to discuss how the insights gained from this research could influence certain policies towards the improvement of public spaces development for the betterment of physical and social life in the urban space of the colonias populares. Finally certain future research directions will be outlined.

8.2. Linking back to the theory

8.2.1 Public space and its socio-spatial-symbolic dimensions

The research about the dynamics of public space transformation in the popular habitat sought to analyse the processes through an integrated theoretical approach including the social, the spatial and the symbolic dimensions. These three dimensions cut across the empirical chapters of the thesis (Chapters 5, 6 and 7). In chapter five the social processes which take place in the development of public space was emphasised. In chapter six the spatiality of public space production through its creation was the leading theme, and also the social dimensions were seen to play an important role. It is through the social practices in space that the material public space is shaped. In chapter seven the three dimensions: social, spatial and symbolic were intertwined and overlapped through the uses, conflicts over usage, and the significance and meanings of public space. The socio-spatial-symbolic dimensions were seen to be linked, mixed and intertwined in the processes of transformation. The research demonstrates that these processes cannot be studied separately; the ways that public space is produced, its development process, its social and physical construction, its use and appropriation and the meanings created by those involved in these processes are all strongly tied together, related to each other and each is the outcome of the other. The processes interact and influence each other and separation in the study of public space dynamics was found not to be a fruitful one.

In this sense, this study agrees with Madanipour, who argues that in order to understand the urban space we need to overlap the socio-spatial-symbolic dimensions. The conceptualization of the space based on these three dimensions offers the path to arrive at *'a common platform in understanding urban space, one that could link various groups who are interested and involved in explanation, interpretation, and transformation of space, allowing them to enter in to a dialogue'* (Madanipour 1996:30).

8.2.3 The conceived public space of popular inhabitants

Under the above theoretical umbrella, this research sought to find the link between the production processes of public space in the colonias and the social production of the space, which has been established by Lefebvre. This was done by relating public space transformation in the popular habitat to Lefebvre's three momentums of social space – the perceived, - the conceived and -the lived space. Lefebvre's conceived space is considered to be relevant in this research. Lefebvre defines 'conceived' space as the *'conceptualized space of technocratic subdividers, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, and social engineers'* (Lefebvre, 2000:198). However, in the popular habitat the conceived space is not particular to those actors mentioned by Lefebvre, the space in the popular habitat is also 'conceived' by the inhabitants. In chapter six, this is demonstrated through the case of colonia Constituyentes, where residents have creatively drawn images about the ideas, concepts, and physical characteristics of the space they would like to see in their public realm. The inhabitants of colonias populares imagine their public space, and they not only imagine it but they also create projects, designing different elements using colours, symbols, and other graphic devices. They visualise the way their environment should look, and provide solutions to the different spatial, social and environmental problems that impinge on their everyday public space. The research demonstrates how inhabitants of the colonias populares go beyond traditional limitations and engage with the space in various ways to create powerful images and visions about what their physical and social urban environment could be like. Through their local knowledge, life experiences and acts of everyday habitation, popular inhabitants become local urban designers of their public spaces. They construct meaningful representations of the urban, on which people base decisions about how to shape the places, spaces and communities in which they live. This is the result of an identification and appropriation process with the environment which leads to actions of transformation. The research shows that not only 'scientists, planners, urbanists, and social engineers' are able to

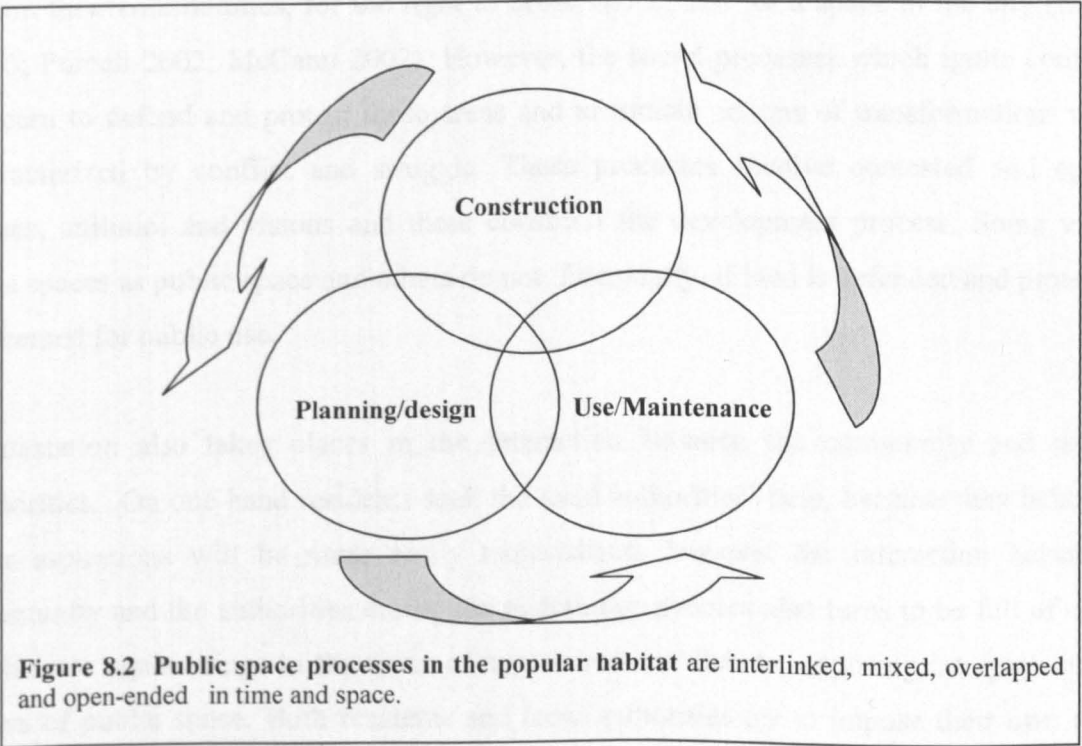
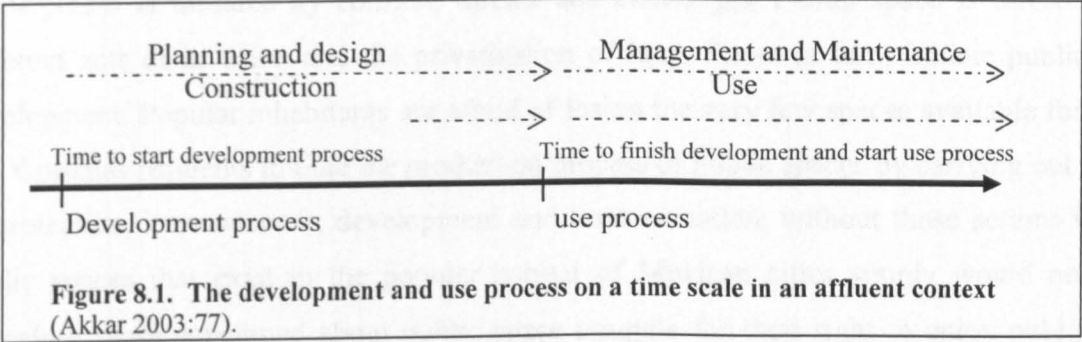
'conceive' projects of urban life as argued by Lefebvre, but also the ordinary people living in cities are able to do it.

8.2.4 Everyday popular urban design

The previous paragraph leads us to continue our discussion started in chapter two about the 'architectural everyday' and 'the everyday public space' as defined by Crawford (1999). The public space in the popular habitat, during its consolidation process, embodies shifting meanings, as the public space is shaped and redefined by the activities that it accommodates. At some moments public space in the popular habitat is a construction site where physical improvement and transformation are taking place and at the same time is the site of activities of play, enjoyment and socialization. Popular inhabitants are the everyday urbanists of their public space through their activities carried out to transform the public realm. In this way as Miles (2000) argued, the city is produced by those who inhabit it.

The colonias' public space illustrates how processes of public space production and consumption take place differently from these processes in affluent societies. Figure 8.1 shows how processes of public space production take place in a different context. Akkar (2003) shows that the production process of public space in Newcastle upon Tyne takes place in a linear way and the development process and the use process take place separately. There is a time for production, and later on after the space has been developed and built, then there is a time of starting to use the space. In the colonias populares public space development and use takes place differently to those described by researchers in affluent societies. Processes take place interchangeably, and the space acquires shifting meanings through the everyday activities that popular inhabitants carry out in the space. Public space is created and used before it is materially developed. It acquires its public quality through everyday activities of conflict, politics, socialization, celebration, fiesta and play. At the same time, public space acquires its material quality through activities of construction and improvement which also represent activities of use and appropriation, in this way public space is socially and physically produced. Inhabitants are constructors and users creating the everyday urbanism in the colonias. They interact with the space and the space interacts with them, both shaping and reshaping each other. Hence, public space is in a continuous process of transformation; it is flexible and open-ended as both Rapoport and Lynch suggest urban environments should be (Figure 8.2).

As seen in chapter five and six, when the municipality intervenes in the development of public space, the local authorities gain control of the process; however later on popular residents continue with their role of constructors and shapers of their environment by personalising the work, and attempting to satisfy the needs that the local authorities do not satisfy. This was seen in the pavements of Paseos de Xalapa Street, and in the case of Villahermosa Park in chapter six. Through this logic popular inhabitants created meaningful environments. They identified with and became attached to the space while creating their own public spaces, thus becoming everyday urban designers. This is a quality which is difficult to find in public spaces created in more affluent societies where there is ‘time to start development’; and later on, a ‘time to finish development’ and finally a ‘time to start using space’. Producers and consumers in these situations are well differentiated, and users have little opportunity to intervene in the development process (Figure 8.1). This logic of development simply does not take place in popular environments.



8.2.5 Contestation and the battlefield

“The will to command public urban space expresses the desire of many urban groups and institutions to be acknowledged, to convey messages forcefully, to promote the legitimacy of one’s case. The process of such expression is great and the contest for visibility and influence lively” (Goheen 1998:494).

One of the main objectives of the research, as stated in chapter one, is to examine the roles, relations and interactions of the actors involved in the transformation processes of public space. One concept that cut across the different themes examined in this study is ‘contestation’. Public spaces in the colonias of Xalapa are highly contested socially, spatially and symbolically. Processes of production and consumption take place in an environment of competing and opposing views, visions, values, social and spatial actions, and interpretations. Contestation, conflict and struggle are the prime characteristics of the processes of transformation of public space in the colonias. Firstly, as seen in chapter five, public space development is initiated by conflict, threats and challenges. Public space is threatened by different acts of invasion and the privatization of land. These in turn, initiate public space development. Popular inhabitants are afraid of losing the very few spaces available for public use. Colonias residents initiate the production process of public spaces by carrying out actions of protection, improvement, development and transformation; without these actions the few public spaces that exist in the popular habitat of Mexican cities simply would not exist. Therefore those concerned about public space struggle for their right to enjoy public space within their communities, for the right to urban space, and for a space in the city (Lefebvre 1996; Purcell 2002; McCann 2002). However, the social processes which ignite community concern to defend and protect these areas and to initiate actions of transformations are also characterized by conflict and struggle. These processes involve contested and opposing values, attitudes and visions and these constrain the development process. Some visualise open spaces as public space and others do not. Eventually, if land is defended and protected, it is deemed for public use.

Contestation also takes places in the interaction between the community and the local authorities. On one hand residents seek the local authorities’ help, because they believe that their aspirations will be more easily materialized, however the interaction between the community and the authorities during the negotiation process also turns to be full of conflict. Each actor again brings to the arena of negotiation and debate, opposing interpretations and views of public space. Both residents and local authorities try to impose their own agenda,

and confrontation eventually takes place. Chapter five showed that the residents of the *colonias populares* want public spaces of quality which solve and satisfy not only functional-environmental problems, but also their needs for beauty¹, aesthetics, and durability. However, the local authorities overlook these needs. Further, they also overlook the cultural and symbolic values that residents have built up on their public space. Therefore, residents struggle to impose their agenda, and the local authorities in turn struggle to dominate the development process. In this sense processes of public space development take place on a resemblance to a battlefield, as Bentley (1999) argues.

Residents of the *colonia* initiate processes of transformation. This fact depends on the power available for *colonias* residents, their capacity to achieve organization within the community, and on their available economic resources and knowledge. The combination of these factors results in different rates of public space consolidation. In their relations with the municipality, political power, knowledge and cultural capital come into play. Municipal officials find different ways to manipulate the community in order impose their rules and the sanctions in order to enforce their rules. These sanctions, in the popular habitat, are simply represented by the risk of not getting development of public space at all or by long delays. This is the way the local authority operates in the case where its agenda does not dominate the development process. For instance, the resulting public space produced in partnership with the municipality is highly dominated by the municipality, to the point, that the participation of residents is diminished to a simple economic contribution. Power relations and the inequality in these relations are an essential characteristic in the interaction of internal (community) and external agents (local authority) in the production processes of public space.

Contestation and conflict also take place in the use of a space where different interpretations and visions are disclosed in relation to what the space is for, how it should be used, and how it should be controlled. Contesting behaviours are seen in the use and appropriation of public space. Chapter seven demonstrated how the public space becomes a battlefield due to different conflicts that arise as a result of the contesting forms of use and appropriation. Many users interpret the spaces differently from those managing and protecting spaces. This situation often creates a conflictive environment. For example, those residents managing and maintaining spaces struggle against users who threaten the permanence for the public good.

¹ A woman from a favela in Sao Paulo (Brazil) argues: "*We also have the right to beauty*" (Borja and Muxi 2000)

Residents protecting spaces set up rules about what the appropriate behaviour and attitudes should be in public spaces. These views compete with the incompatible interpretations of those who try to destroy and damage the physical and social life of public spaces. Moreover, as seen in Chapter six, competing views and interpretations can emerge due to the co-habitation of different groups and individual within the community (e.g. adults or youngsters).

Disagreements about maintenance also take place. Questions arise about who is responsible for the maintenance of the space: the community or the local authority? Again, opposing interpretations and views appear. Within the community, conflicts about maintenance arise among residents, as seen in Chapter seven. An example of this is the case of Solidaridad Park where households agreed that each of them would individually maintain the space in front of their dwellings. Some residents maintained their space and others did not. This resulted in an uneven maintenance of the park and in a conflictive situation between residents, where different interpretations and views about the maintenance of the space were observed. The physical space eventually showed that a conflict and a lack of sense of community existed among residents. Disputes about maintenance also take place with the local authorities. The local authorities claim that inhabitants do not participate, that they do not know what a public space means and that people do not care about public spaces. Residents argue that they do care about their public space, but that, the local authority offers no support for improvement, development and maintenance of public space. This research found that colonias residents do care about their public space and this is demonstrated with the different cases of self-help practices, and self-organization analysed in Xalapa. However, as seen in Chapter five, participation is constrained by other different social and political factors. Competing views between the local authorities and the community exist about public space maintenance, about who is responsible for the space, about who does and does not pay attention to? And who does and does not care. These actors compete for the maintenance of public space in the colonias of Xalapa. Finally, when the community does not receive the support of the municipality, the residents become fully responsible of the maintenance of their public space as seen in the cases of Mascareñas, Jovita and Villahermosa Parks.

Contestation also takes place at the symbolic level. Conflict at the symbolic level takes place all along the process of public space transformation. Processes of transformation represent different meanings for those involved. Public space transformation takes place according to these meanings. For some, space is seen as private, others see it as public. Some regard

public as a community asset, some others try to damage its permanence. Moreover, those concerned within the community see it as an inheritance for future generations. On the other hand the municipality sees it as an instrument to gain political power in spite of community participation, and public space quality, as shown in the case of Colonia Tres de Mayo in Chapter five. In Chapter seven, the discussion about naming Jovita Park in Colonia Revolucion also showed the existence of competing representations of public space at the symbolic level. The representations of the popular inhabitants differed from the ideas that the local authorities had for the space. Conflict and struggle was faced by the residents who opposed the local authorities who wanted to name their public space with a name completely unconnected to the life of popular residents. The residents resisted and protested in order to keep the name they had chosen through common agreement. They defended the name that was significant and meaningful for them. Even though the authority officially named the park with a new name, the space is known by the name the residents attributed to it. Again the political objectives of the authorities and the cultural objectives of the community were in competition. Therefore, public space represents the place where spatial, social and symbolic contestations take place in the process of the social production and the social construction of a public space in the colonias. Low conceptualized these arguments as follows '*public space is the focus of contestation and a place where disagreements and conflicts over cultural and political objectives become concrete* (Low 2000:238). This was certainly found to be true in the five colonias studied for this thesis.

8.2.6 Meaningful public places

The combination of the social, spatial and symbolic dimensions of the production and consumption processes of public space is what creates meaningful public places in the colonias populares. Public space in the popular habitat is as meaningful to popular communities as the central plaza, or the monumental space of the central city, if not more. A public space in the colonias also embodies the history and culture of its producers and users. The research demonstrates that public spaces in the colonias are charged with people's memories, and experiences of social public life. These reveal people's close relationship with their urban space throughout the process of transformation. Meaningful public places are created through the everyday acts of use, creation, contestation, conflict, celebration and commemoration in which popular inhabitants play the main role. In this way, people and the physical environment are strongly connected and entangled.

The physical environment plays an important role as a facilitator of urban life. However it is not the only component for the creation of meaningful spaces, the social interaction and relations taking place in space, through which individuals identify with their public space are also important components. Further, the different values and representations (physical, social and symbolic) that residents attribute to public space play an important role. This reminds us of the discussion about Jovita Park, which initially was only an open space with very little improvement. In spite of this, however the space was already in truth a public place where celebrations, parties, social life, conflict, and contestations were already taking place, and all this remains in the memory of the residents. For instance, in this public space the combination of the social life, the spatial actions and the physical space created a meaningful public place. Residents of the colonias created '*convivial*' public spaces which is described as '*an autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment*' (Illich 1980). These meanings are communicated to everyday users, since it is perceived that somebody is taking care of the space, looking after it, and therefore the space itself communicates that it should be respected. This study demonstrates that the public realm of the colonias is also a mnemonic as Rapoport argued '*particular locations within the city, their physical and social characteristics, all take on symbolic meaning and indicate much about individuals and groups, they become symbols of social, ethnic and other identities and play a role in the survival of such groups*' (Rapoport 1977:323). Therefore, public spaces in the popular habitat are meaningful because they communicate messages about the processes of transformation, and embody the memory of those involved. Low puts it as follows '*public spaces retain cultural and political meanings which are symbolically encoded in their spatial relations and built environment*' (Low 2000:238). Meaningful public spaces in the colonias are created through the intercourse of people and their public realm. This intercourse communicates messages about the people and the place. Finally, as Low argues, processes of transformation are charged of cultural and political meanings.

8.2.7 Builder of Culture and Identity

Researchers have highlighted the cultural expression of popular environments mainly through the construction of housing (such as Rapoport 1977; Kellett 1995; Klaufus 2000). However, very little has been said about public spaces in popular urban environments. This research demonstrates that public spaces in colonias populares represent another means through which inhabitants express their cultural values and identity. Chapter six, within our discussion about shrines, demonstrated that in Colonia Constituyentes and Colonia Revolucion residents solved

environmental and social problems through culture, and through the expression of their religious beliefs. Further, the construction of Villahermosa Park in Colonia Ferrocarrilera and Mascarenas Park in Colonia Los Pinos shows how residents left their cultural mark through their actions of improvement and transformation in the way they protected their park, and solved problems concerning playground equipment, fences, and benches. Later on in Chapter seven, we saw how actions of use and appropriation are embedded in culturally shared values. Everyday activities, spaces for partying, spaces for commemoration, and celebration, and even for productive activities demonstrate that public spaces in the popular habitat are not only about challenging threats, or solving basic urban needs, but public space interventions are also about building, promoting, and enhancing the culture of the colonias people. This includes local, civic and national culture. These findings are the result of looking at the urban environment through the eyes of those who produce and consume it, instead of using a top down perspective which only looks at the form separated from the social process that produce it.

The research also demonstrates that the productive space of the *tianguis* is an enhancer of culture. These views oppose those expressed by Amante (2003) who sees the *tianguis* as a contributor to urban fragmentation, chaos and urban disorder in his research about the urban morphology of Mexican cities. From our perspective, this research shows how in Colonia Revolucion the productive activity of the *tianguis* produce enjoyment, and a place of meeting and entertainment for thousands of families. Moreover it is regarded as a place to be proud of because it represents the colonia's progress. Therefore, this element is a promoter and enhancer of popular culture. In addition, from an economic point of view the *tianguis* is a market that reinforces the local economy where small producers and businesses and even colonias' residents are given the opportunity to enhance their economy. On the other hand, it is recognized that the right control and the right supportive physical environment for this activity is needed. However, this should be carefully done without undermining the benefits and qualities that these activities provide to colonias people.

In parallel with the quality of public space as a cultural enhancer comes the quality of public space as an enhancer of identity as demonstrated in Chapters five, six and seven, through the different practices of physical transformation and appropriation. Public space has the capacity of acquiring, promoting and enhancing identity in cities. It is part of the human condition to be recognized and identified with the social and physical context where we live and public

space is an important contributor. This is demonstrated through the aspirations examined in Chapter six with the *'urban imaginaries'* that residents visualize for the future of the public spaces. For example, this was observed in the case of Colonia Revolucion where residents wanted to build an obelisk in order to show everybody the identity of the colonia and at the same time have it as a referent for visitors, as a referent of collective identity. Therefore public space enhances social, collective and individual identity through the different processes of transformation. As seen in Chapter seven the identity of individuals is promoted to higher levels through public space transformations. As a resident expressed: *'Now I feel no shame about saying where I live'*. The public spaces in the popular habitat represent:

"The conception people have formed of themselves, the role they are striving to live up to, and the kind of urban environment they would like to achieve. In this way the popular urban environment is the mask that dwellers try to show in the social context they are immersed in, acquiring a position in the neighbourhood environment, and more importantly in the city and in the social structure of the urban society" (Hernandez-Bonilla and Kellett, 2004).

In addition, processes of production and consumption are considered to be of great value for the younger generations as part of their educational and cultural formation. This was seen in Jovita, Mascarenas and Villahermosa Parks where residents regarded interventions as opportunities to teach about community. Further, this education is promoted through the use processes, where residents encourage educational activities for the personal and cultural development of youngsters and children. These educational events, together with the variety of residents' celebrations and everyday local practices, reaffirm the cultural quality of public space in the colonias.

Public space is created through dynamic processes. The different practices that give rise to processes of production and consumption endow the public spaces of the colonias with a dynamic identity. As Zept (2000:41) argues *'public spaces acquire a non-static identity'* and this emerges from public space spatial configuration, social structuring, and the processes by which it is created. Through actions of transformation residents build a path towards a public space culture and identity. This is achieved through the transformation of public space as a result of the social, spatial and symbolic dimensions constructed by inhabitants. Everyday activities in public spaces create and recreate a public space culture which eventually enriches the social and urban identity of the colonias. Public space serves as an instrument to build and enhance culture and identity.

8.2.8 Authentic public spaces?

Public space in the colonias incorporates many characteristics which professional designers of public spaces seek to achieve in practice. Public space in the colonias is characterised by multifunctionality, dynamism and vitality, and more importantly, they embody all the characteristics of a true public space. Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee (1998) define public space as the *“forum of political action and representation; as a ‘neutral’ or common ground for social interaction, intermingling, and communication; and a stage for social learning, personal development, and information exchange”*. Later on, Carmona et al. (2003:109) argue that *“these functions are rarely (if ever) wholly attained in practice, their definition provides a measure of the degree to which ‘real’ public realms fall short of the ideal state”*. Relating these arguments to what has been found in the research of public spaces in the colonias populares, it can be said that public spaces in the colonias fully attain the functions outlined by Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee. The conflicts and negotiations which take place about public space grant them the characteristic of forum of political action and communication. They also fulfil the function of common ground for social interaction, intermingling and communication through all the spatial and social practices taking place all along the processes of transformation. Further, they are also a stage of social learning, personal development and information exchange as studied in Chapter seven. All these functions and characteristics were found in the dynamics of public space transformation. Even though the processes take place within very constraining scenarios with several limitations, in the context of colonias these functions do not fall short of an ideal state of public space, as Carmona argues, on the contrary each function is fully expressed through the different process that create it.

The dynamism of public spaces is the result of its multifunctional nature. Multifunctionality is another characteristic which also produces spaces of vitality. In this respect Montgomery argues *‘multi-functional places are far and away more interesting than single purpose spaces. The tragedy of town planning is that it has, since its early days, sought to thin out the city and separate activities from each other’*. (Montgomery 1995). Public spaces in the colonias contrast with those modern urban spaces created by many professional designers and planners in Mexican cities and other cities around the world. These have initially been criticised by Jacobs (1961) who claims about a destruction of sense of belonging and social cohesiveness. Further, Sennett (1994) considers today’s public spaces as ‘dead’. And Auge (1995) characterizes them as being ‘non-places’, which create the ‘pseudo-public spaces’ as theorized by Mitchell (1995) who argues about their extreme regulation, control and almost

privatization . Nowadays Mexican cities, in their affluent face, are more than ever being built following the trends of modernity and all the issues surrounding it. Shopping malls, gated neighbourhoods, motorways, and corporate centres contrast with the dynamics taking place in the popular habitat. This is ironic when considered in a context of differences, contrasts and inequalities. Those spaces created by the powerless are the spaces which offer us examples of social and political locus, spaces of integration, representation, and human development, and are truly dynamic, multifunctional and vital. These findings contradict what Viviescas (1997) argues about the existence of a spatial insensibility and simplicity towards public space in popular habitats, where he says , people do not perceive the relations and the significance of public space as a container of expression. Further, Viviescas argues that people do not perceive public space as a result of architecture, urbanism, art, and promoter of symbolism, history, memory, party, play, meeting, exchange and conversation. If this were true popular inhabitants would not even defend or initiate the development of their public spaces in the first place. And the public spaces created by popular residents are frequently more public, vital and dynamic than those created by and for affluent groups of the society. In the context of spontaneous settlements, Rapoport presents similar sentiments:

"How is it that people who are often illiterate, with very limited resources and power, and hence operating under stringent constraints-economic, informational, political, and so on - are able to produce settings and environments that I at least judge to be vastly superior, in terms of cultural supportiveness and perceptual quality, than designers working in the same places? I would go further – these environments are frequently even of higher quality than those of designers working in much more developed and wealthier places." (Rapoport 1988:72)

8. 3 Policy implications

8.3.1 Changing Attitudes

Attitudes of the municipal authorities towards public space are very diverse. With regard to street paving, the municipal authorities are usually worried about the number of square meters of pavements and carriageway paved. This is one of the most important activities within the municipal agenda. Certainly, this is an important problem to tackle, since in many colonias residents have been waiting for these works to be carried out for more than thirty years. However, in many cases quality is not on the agenda, as was seen in Chapter five, within the discussion about the negotiations for materials. Residents of colonias are also worried about

the quality of the works and that is what they demand from the municipality. Residents feel that it is not only about quantity, and it is not only about providing low income neighbourhoods with whatever might do. Jacobs and Appleyard (1996:497) argue along these lines when they say “*Good design must be for the poor as well as the rich. Indeed, it is more needed by the poor*”. This is demonstrated in those cases where residents do not even accept the paving of their street because of the low quality of the works that the municipality is providing. Residents of the colonias adopt this attitude based on their experiences of observing other streets where paving works have been carried out with very low quality materials and after a couple of years very little of those improvements remain. Thinking about long term improvements with quality rather than quantity and short term solutions is an issue to reflect on. It is true that there are many needs to meet for the betterment of Mexican cities, and local authorities try to solve as many problems as possible. In this way, authorities often overlook the quality of these solutions. However, Chapter five demonstrates that residents are often willing to wait until long term and high quality solutions are provided. This is related to what was discussed in Chapter seven, in which actions of improvement and transformation are regarded as issues related to patrimony. Public space in the colonias is seen as a valuable asset which is left for the young and future generations. It is evident that, colonias residents also think in urban sustainable terms “thinking in the urban environment for future generations” and more importantly about a sustainable public space of transcendence and permanence. Hanna Arendt expresses these ideas in the following way:

“Only the existence of a public realm and the world’s subsequent transformation into a community of things which gathers men together and relates them to each other depends entirely on permanence. If the world is to contain a public space, it cannot be erected for one generation and planned for the living only; it must transcend the life-span of mortal men. Without this transcendence into a potential earthly immortality, no politic, strictly speaking, no common world and no public realm is possible” (Arendt 1987:9).

8.3.2 Securing public space

Regarding plots allocated for public spaces, there are different issues to tackle. Firstly, one of the most important aspects is how to avoid the uncertain status of the land allocated for public uses. Land legalization in popular settlements has been widely promoted for several decades by Mexican governmental policies towards the betterment and consolidation of colonias populares. This is certainly an important policy towards the provision of secure tenure of land for housing and certainly an important factor influencing housing improvement and services

provision. However, plots allocated for public use have been completely neglected within the policies of legalization and regularization of the land in colonias populares. Public spaces for neighbourhood parks, playgrounds and other public facilities have been left at the mercy of corrupt leaders, authorities, politicians and many other individuals and groups. The land for public uses has been a point of contention, speculation and invasion, as seen in Chapter five. This is because the spaces allocated for public uses in the colonias rarely have a property title which defines their public status. Spaces are known as 'areas de donacion' (donation areas) in which local authorities have property rights. Therefore the municipality has the freedom to use the land according to the 'collective interest', which frequently does not happen. As seen in this study, in Xalapa the local authorities often act as a privatizing agent. They also speculate with these spaces against the community, and often neglect the value of these spaces for the social, environmental, and cultural development of the community. The security of the land allocated for public spaces in the colonias is urgently needed. Property titles legally defining spaces' public status with an irrevocable character are needed in order to avoid the invasions and privatization of the land. In addition this would avoid disputes, conflicts and struggles which contribute to community fragmentation and instability. Furthermore, it is important to inform colonias' residents about the legal status of their public spaces, who in turn, under a legal framework, would successfully protect their public spaces. Monnet (1997:68) puts it in the following words: *The emphasis on the public and private dialectic in the urbanization process and the definition of these spaces is fundamental for the "art of living in society"*.

In addition to granting legal property titles defining the 'publicness' of public spaces, it is also necessary to include colonias' public spaces for recreation and green areas in the planning documents of the city such as in the *Plan de Ordenamiento Urbano del Area Metropolitana*². This regulates the land use and growth of the city at the macro level. However, it should also be addressed at the micro level of districts and neighbourhoods. At the micro level, this could define the public and private uses of the colonias. This could be another legal instrument to allocate public spaces in the city according to real needs, and more importantly it would be a legal instrument to protect these spaces. Through this instrument even local authorities could not modify their public status. Further, it could help to balance the number of public spaces and recreational areas in the city and to programme strategies for improvement and

² Urban Program of the Metropolitan Area of Xalapa: Programa de Ordenamiento Urbano del Area Metropolitana: Xalapa-Banderilla-Coatepec-Emiliano Zapata-San Andres Tlalnahuayocan. 1998. Secretaria de Desarrollo Urbano del Estado de Veracruz

transformation uniformly. This would also allow the creation of spaces of social and environmental significance, which would enhance the urban environment of the city as a whole.

8.3.3 Participatory approaches

With regard to the processes of public space development, it is important to recognize that public space improvement and development takes place according to a participatory pattern. As was described in Chapter five, (Figure 5.1) i) the community firstly identifies, needs, problems and threats; ii) secondly, individuals build up aspirations, and collectivize these aspirations in order to achieve community organization and consensus; iii) thirdly, residents promote these aspirations internally through physical and social actions and interventions and externally seek alliances with external agents (mainly the municipality); iv) and finally the process continues working in collaboration with the authorities (politicians, planners, and architects) to achieve visions and goals. The way the development process takes places clearly illustrates how participatory projects can be carried out through a bottom up, rather than a top down process. The problem in colonias populares is that when local authorities intervene the process turns around from bottom up to top down process.

In top down processes, the community is on the bottom and is only taken into account (if ever) at the very end of the planning and design process. As seen in Chapter five in Colonia Tres de Mayo, the project for public space was promoted by colonias residents. Residents achieved community organization and even developed a project. However once the municipality intervened, the whole process turned around to a top down project in which the municipality neglected the community, and overlooked local knowledge, and previous actions and activities for the betterment of the space. This attitude is often observed in many other urban improvement projects in colonias populares. Moreover, peoples' participation is often manipulated and projects and improvements have even been imposed, as seen in the cases of Solidaridad Park, or in the imposition of low quality materials as seen in some streets in Colonia Revolucion and other colonias. Further, the community is often manipulated by local authorities who tell them that *'they are very lucky to have got help from the municipality, and therefore they should accept any improvement'*. The theories of participation of Arnstein (1969) are considered to be relevant. In Arnstein's ladder of participation, the processes can be regarded as top down where citizens are located at the bottom of the ladder as 'non-participants' through manipulation and therapy.

Local authorities have often imposed projects that do not solve the real needs of the community. This clearly contradicts what is said by municipal officials that; *'we take into account the inhabitants', 'their opinion is the most important for us'*. Chapter five clearly demonstrates that this is certainly not the reality. The reality is that the community's opinion and participation is reduced to an economic contribution, as one municipal official in Xalapa stated *'this year people collaborated and participated more than ever because the municipality has been able to recover much more money than ever before'*³. It is true that through peoples' economic contribution the municipality gets resources to finance more public works in the city. However it is crucial to get an understanding of what participation and collaboration in the creation of public space mean. Collaboration means to be heard, and acknowledged in the planning, design and management processes as Healey argues: the process;

'should recognise the range and variety of stakeholders concerned with changes to local, urban and regional environments, their social networks, the diversity of their cultural points of reference and their system of meanings and the complex power relations which may exist within and between them' (Healey 1997:288)

Public space is a collective good and must be constructed collectively. Public space processes require debates, forums and mainly the recognition of peoples' culture, strategies, and skills. In the case of colonias populares, meetings between residents and local authorities only take place at the beginning when residents initiate the process of development through their petitions. Later on, meetings take place only to discuss residents' economic contribution. Community meetings should also take place during the process of planning and design, where authorities, together with the community, create more responsive, inclusive and sustainable urban environments through participatory planning and design techniques (e.g. design workshops, planning aid sessions, meetings, and consultations). Through these participatory strategies, communities will feel more identification with the public spaces produced, they are more likely to appreciate it, and therefore feel more attached to it and will therefore take more care of it. Moreover, participatory techniques will give opportunities to create more holistic strategies and solutions; not only giving physical solutions to problems in isolation, but also taking into account the knowledge of communities to provide solutions to other local urban problems. Integrated strategies which include economic, social and environmental solutions to the problems impinging on neighbourhoods can be discussed and tackled. This will also allow thinking in short and long term strategies of urban improvement in an integrated and holistic

³ Interview with an official at the Office of Citizen participation, 01 August 2002

manner. Furthermore, working in participation with communities will teach local authorities new values, new ways of understanding and appreciation, and therefore new forms of approaching communities' problems.

Unfortunately, local authorities often disregard communities' capacities, and interventions take place without taking local knowledge into account. Another municipal official told us *"the colonias are often created by people who come from outside, and due to their idiosyncrasy, and lifestyle, people are not used to urban public spaces, they do not know what it means to have a public space"*. Moreover, a municipal architect who is in charge of public projects⁴ at the municipality told us *"I do not really know why people go and what they do in a park, I feel myself that it is a waste of time to go and sit in a park"*. These statements remind us of the resident quoted in Chapter three who told the researcher *"Nobody ever before had asked me, what I think, how I feel..."* It is crucial to change the attitudes of local authorities. The thoughts expressed by the municipal officials reveal that they are very far from achieving public spaces of participation and quality, which are responsive to local needs, culture, and aspirations. Public spaces, with such characteristics, will only be achieved by working closely with communities, by learning about them, and by recognizing their valuable input towards the construction of the city, citizenship and society. Moreover, it is crucial that there is recognition of the values of public space by those managing Mexican urban environments towards the construction of real liveable cities. Without a change of attitudes by those in charge of colonias' development, public spaces of quality, integration and continuity have very little future. Alexander argues: *'Without common land no social system can survive'* (Alexander, 1977:337). Without a common land, without urban public spaces, and with attitudes that neglect the importance of public space and its relationship to city inhabitants the opportunity to create a city that is socially and environmentally viable characterised by a sense of community, participation and belonging is dismissed. If public spaces are created through democratic participatory process in which all actors recognize their own roles, and if all voices are taken into account, the long term permanence of public space is secured.

8.3.4 Training and Education

A change of attitudes can be achieved by training local authorities, officials and servants, teaching them about the different implications of their activities in the construction of the city.

⁴ Interview with the Architect in charge of the department of projects at Public Works Office in Xalapa. 19 December 2002

Various issues need to be addressed. Municipal authorities must recognise that their physical interventions also have a social impact. Moreover, they also have to recognize that the long term success of any physical intervention depends of how much these interventions are socially responsive. This can only be achieved by learning to work in collaboration with the community at all levels and stages in the process of planning, design, construction, and the management of any physical intervention. The challenge is to convert the aspirations and dreams of the community into the driving forces of public space programmes. It is necessary to recognize that it is the community who eventually will benefit or suffer from these interventions.

Changes will come, but only if training and education of new generations is corrected. Architects have been trained with a very technical or artistic approach, often not focusing on the humanistic aspects of the discipline and its relationships with the social sciences. In the Mexican context, urban planning and management is mainly carried out by architects whose education in urban studies is rather limited. Further, some universities do not even integrate urban studies within their architectural programs. And those who have urban studies within their profile, such as urban design courses are largely outdated. Courses are still based on the theoretical foundations derived from the modernist movement (Winfield, 2004), in which the roles and significance of public space are neglected. Moreover, projects and themes related to the popular habitat are rarely tackled within the architectural programmes. A revision of what is being taught to new generations of architects is crucial. A revision of the kind of urban environments we want to create and how we want to create them is necessary. The incorporation of new themes, new theoretical directions, based on multidisciplinary approaches is urgently needed. In this way, we will be able to cover humanistic and socio-cultural approximations in architectural education, which will provide satisfactory responses to the local urban reality. This will also be achieved by paying more attention to the local reality by looking at the ordinary and every day city as has been done in this thesis. In the British context, Samuels (1999) argues that architectural courses rarely include projects on the ordinary, on the contrary all student projects are about special buildings and they all have pretensions of producing works of art. In the Mexican context, similar situations take place, however in a situation of poverty and where the majority of the urban and architectural space is produced by ordinary people, what Samuels argues results in a real contradiction.

In Chapter five, in the case of Colonia Tres de Mayo, we mentioned that two architectural students helped the residents to develop the project for their park. Similarly, in some universities architectural students are taken by lecturers to carry out social work, helping colonias populares' residents to improve their urban environment. These activities represent great value as they teach architectural students to work in collaboration with those who use the city. Further, students also learn about the social relevance of the architectural practice. Although in some universities this may be addressed, commonly this sort of activity are rarely included as part of architects' education. Working closely with communities should officially be part of architectural programmes. This would also allow architectural students to be aware of the importance of participatory processes in the production of the city. There are many urban problems in Mexican cities that urban design studios could easily address through real projects in low-income neighbourhoods, and through working with colonias' residents and helping them to materialize their aspirations through design and planning proposals. Better training of younger generations is the key for the emergence of an urban space of quality that is inclusive, collaborative and responsive.

Education is a key aspect to promote peoples' participation in achieving successful and high quality public spaces. Not only new professionals, but also the community and younger generations have to be taught about the importance of public spaces, and beyond about sustainable urban environments. Architects, planners, and universities can be engaged with communities, teaching them to care about the environment, involving them, and teaching them that they are key actors in the successful improvement and development of their neighbourhoods. As seen in Chapter seven, public places are often stigmatized as places where youngsters hang around damaging the social and physical life of their environment. Teenagers, as well as many adults, often do not care about the maintenance and good condition of public spaces. In Chapter seven, the case of Villahermosa Park demonstrates how residents and promoters really struggled with many users to keep their park in good condition. This was achieved by a process of education, teaching users the importance of the public assets and their value in the community and therefore teaching people to respect the public spaces. There are many ways to communicate these skills to communities; through workshops, exhibitions, and community meetings in the colonias. Moreover, these aspects can be taught in primary, secondary and high schools; teaching the youth the importance of their participation towards an urban environments of quality. These schools could also be involved in the management and maintenance of public spaces, and together with residents of the

colonias could support the permanence of parks, green areas, and playgrounds located nearby. In this way the promotion of a culture of public space could also be included in educational programmes. A better education for the younger generations would entail a better future for urban spaces, however without a change in education which communicate new values towards urban environments, very little change will be achieved

8.3.5 Even distribution of resources

Another attitude that needs to be assessed is about the concentration of efforts in public space management and maintenance in the central areas of the city. Residents often argue that the municipal workers rarely go to the peripheral colonias; however they are continuously changing plants and making colourful shapes and new forms in the parks and green areas of the central areas of the city. It is important to pay attention to the colonias, and to recognize the benefits of public spaces in the colonias' social and physical environment. Although it is true that municipal financial resources are very stretched, a balance in their allocation and an even management and maintenance should be pursued. The local authority should understand that it is not only important to construct more pavements, more streets, or more parks; it is also important to take care of the existing ones, and secure the permanence of public spaces. This could be done by supporting the community initiatives of maintenance and management. Concentrating resources only in certain parts of the city accentuates the already unequal, segregated and exclusionary urban landscapes of Mexican cities. The failure of many public spaces is due to the lack of follow-up after spaces have been built. A permanent programme for the maintenance and community support for public spaces should be introduced.

8.3.6 Recognising peoples' organization

The availability of economic resources is not the only factor; however the recognition and legitimisation of peoples' organization and strategies, which enhance processes is also very important. For instance, as seen in Chapter five, the cases of Mascarenas, Villahermosa, and Jovita Parks, and the construction of pavements in Zumarraga Street are valuable examples of what the community can achieve with their own resources. It is important to support activities undertaken by agents of change and community boards and groups. The municipality however does not support them and generally does not know about peoples' initiatives. Residents in turn, claim a lack of support from the local authorities. Again, working collaboratively is the answer as Healey (1997:288) states collaboration, '*should open up*

opportunities for informal invention and for local initiatives. It should enable and facilitate, encouraging diversity in routines and styles of organising, rather than imposing single ordering principles of social and economic life'. In this way the local authorities, rather than constraining peoples' initiative should acknowledge, promote and foster peoples' ways of organising public spaces. This will represent great contributions in the construction, improvement and maintenance of public spaces, new ways of organisation, and recognising peoples' abilities would enhance the processes, and consequently public spaces in Mexican cities. The cases examined in this thesis illustrate how the public urban space is developed by people, through people and for people who work collectively and collaboratively.

8.3.7 Reinforcing Social Cohesion

An aspect that has been widely ignored is the lack of action taken to build communities' social cohesion. It has been commonly argued that Latin Americans are efficient at empowering themselves and building collective action, however, this is not always the case. As we saw in Chapter five, agents of change struggle to achieve social cohesion within the colonias and to achieve organisation towards public space improvements and development. Very little has been done to strengthen social integration and cohesion in the colonias, on the contrary politicians and authorities have contributed to the communities' fragmentation as seen for example in the case of Señora Lilia, also in Chapter five. Actions towards social integration and cohesion are crucial for the development of public spaces, and beyond that, for the development of a strong and integrated society.

As seen in this research, public space development in the colonias usually takes place when strong social ties and links exist among inhabitants. It is necessary to provide support to colonias residents, helping them to achieve organization so they can create improvement and transformation. A relevant concept in this discussion is 'social capital' as defined by the political scientist Robert Putnam who describes social capital as; *'features of social organisation, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate action and co-operation for mutual benefit'* (in McAslan 2001:140). Therefore, fostering the social capital of inhabitants should be a major task in the colonias. Agents of change in colonias often get discouraged when they do not find support internally or externally, therefore they lose the impetus, and abandon the project of improvement and transformation. There is a need to strengthen the social capital of colonias' residents and provide social support to motivate and encourage the community to collaborate, and therefore facilitate actions of transformation. This can be

achieved through social programmes which bring communities together and enhance the social cohesion among colonias' residents. Social cohesion in colonias populares is an essential tool for a successful public realm.

Public spaces represent important vehicles to reinforce social cohesion and the cases discussed in this thesis are good examples of how community cohesion can be achieved and how this in turn improves public spaces. The research demonstrates that through social cohesion people have learnt about the importance of public spaces. As seen in the parks and the streets of the colonias, agents of change have encouraged positive appropriation, a sense of belonging and an attachment to public places. This has happened through everyday social relations and even through parties and celebrations. Parties and celebrations are excellent tools to promote social cohesion among communities, and these should be promoted and supported by the local authorities. Celebrations, and even educational events in public spaces, have strengthened social cohesion, which in turn has encouraged children and adults to participate in the defence, protection and development of public spaces. Further, such activities have been crucial in developing a public space culture among colonias' inhabitants. As seen in Jovita and Villahermosa Parks, the children who participated initially, were years later, still working in favour of their public space as adults. This was the result of the appreciation of the social experiences and the cohesion experienced in the space. Public space initiators create partnerships for the future life of their public realm by promoting the permanence and transcendence of public space. Furthermore, as seen in Chapter five, residents from one colonia have also helped residents of other colonias to defend and improve their public spaces. This is important because community based organization networks represent another important instrument for the betterment of urban environments, as demonstrated in the cases of Mascarenas, Villahermosa and Colonias Unidas Parks. In context of economic limitations and governmental incapacity to meet community needs, community networks and partnerships created as a result of strong social cohesion could help to manage urban problems.

Local governments should facilitate the action and cooperation of mutual benefit in Mexican neighbourhoods in order to achieve and sustain permanent public spaces. Social cohesion can be achieved by investing in the 'soft infrastructure' (animation, activities, use) of the public realm, as Montgomery argues; *'The point to stress here is that attention to the 'soft infrastructure' of events, programmes and activities is as important for successful urban*

revitalisation as building works and street design' (Montgomery 1995:16). Investing in the soft infrastructure is fruitful in achieving social cohesion, collective identity, and therefore ultimately people's organization of initiatives for urban improvement. Enabling and encouraging communities to appropriate their public spaces will reinforce community links. In this way strong social foundations are created which sustain and create permanent, successful, busy and memorable public places, rather than fragmented and conflictive ones. The importance of these human and social aspects is stressed by Peattie, who says: *'Human happiness, creative activity and a sense of community count for at least as much and maybe more than material standards of living'* (Peattie 1998:248).

8.4 Some suggestions for future research

Research on public spaces in Mexico, and in general in Latin America, is scarce. Urban researchers have concentrated on socio-political and economic aspects of the urban environment and have put aside other important dimensions. Moreover, the study of popular urban environments has been highly concentrated on themes related to housing usually neglecting the other elements that integrate the urban environment. Methodologically speaking, research has been characterized by quantitative approaches rather than qualitative approaches again putting aside the human dimensions of a city. In addition, urban researchers have approached themes in isolation thereby restricting their scope to their own disciplines.

Integrated and holistic studies with qualitative approaches are limited in urban research in Mexico. A socio-spatial-symbolic approach in the study of the urban environment, and concretely in public space research, has rarely been adopted. This thesis has adopted this framework of analysis in order to achieve an understanding of the production and consumption processes of our urban space. This framework of analysis could be applied in the study of public spaces, not only in other colonias populares, but also in public spaces located in the central areas of Mexican cities. This research encourages researchers to adopt this framework in other settings of the urban space. The framework could be used in new housing developments or in the barrios of the historic centre where different problems, actors and relations influence the processes. This framework could offer useful insights about the process of urban open space transformation in other contexts within the same city providing an integrated and holistic view.

In the case of the study of Xalapa, research could continue to examine the new public spaces created by the municipality, such as in the case of Colonia Tres de Mayo. The time limitation within the PhD programme did not allow recording issues about maintenance, use and appropriation of the new public space to be recorded and studied. Research could also explore how the community appropriates new spaces in the long term, especially keeping in mind that colonias' residents have been quite overlooked by the local authorities in the production processes. This raises the question about how the community will interact with the space after having been neglected in transformation processes. Moreover, comparisons can be made with other new public spaces that have been produced similarly. Comparative studies with other colonias populares in Xalapa and even in other Mexican cities could shed light on the existence of different internal and external actors, different initiatives and strategies, and different attitudes from stakeholders. In addition there may be different constraints which impinge on public space development in other areas of the country, where different social, economical, political, cultural factors may influence the processes. Comparative studies based on case studies in two or more cities will give us a broader overview of how public space transformation is taking place in the country. For example, comparisons with colonias located in the more affluent cities of the north of the country will provide some new perspectives. Comparative studies with colonias located in the cities in the poorer more southern states of the country, would also offer new insights. These would take into account the diversity of the groups who inhabit the cities of these regions, in which different cultures, values, and lifestyles play an important role on how public space processes take place. Further, it will be also interesting to do comparative work between cities in different countries in Latin America.

In the last decade Mexico has gone through many political changes. Nowadays, a more pluralistic and democratic political system governs the country. Apparently, new local governments with different ideologies govern the municipalities with renewed commitments and promises to respond to the needs of the people and deliver solutions. Thus interest in enhancing the urban environment of colonias populares and in changing old practices from previous governments has been intensified. An exploration of governmental attitudes towards public space production, improvement and transformation between different municipalities would also shed light on how urban environments are being managed in relation to the provision, development and transformation of public space. Different strategies, actors, and actions might also be identified which would contribute to our understanding of the urban production.

At the Latin American level, in the last few years, renewed and more integrated policies have been introduced at national levels for urban development and poverty reduction of low-income urban neighbourhoods. The creation, improvement and transformation of public spaces for physical and social integration play a prominent role in these programmes. For example, in 1998 in Chile, the programme “Chile Barrio”⁵ was created; in Brazil, the programme of Favela-Barrio was introduced earlier, in 1994 (Fernandez Wagner 2001). In 2003, in Mexico such policies have now been integrated in the programme called ‘Habitat’(SEDESOL 2003). To examine these new strategies towards public space development is crucial in order to know how the ‘renewed’ policies are tackling public spaces transformation and how much colonias residents are being taken into account in the improvements of their public spaces. It would also be interesting to explore how the different actors are collaborating and interacting. Another issue to be explored is related to the quality of the interventions and design solutions provided. It may be found that again, the approaches are quantitatively oriented, and neglect the significance of public spaces and overlook the local knowledge, and the peoples’ culture and organization. The examination of these new governmental strategies under the banner of more humanistic, social and participative approaches would inform the processes of public space transformation. It would be interesting to know the answers to several key questions: Are the processes really driven by human, social and participative concerns? What is unique to the findings in the case of Xalapa? By exploring these new strategies which are taking place in Mexican cities where the programme is being applied, research would offer new insights about how urban space is being transformed.

8. 5 Concluding thoughts

Public spaces should be honoured, respected, and looked after. Public spaces of quality, which bring communities together, represent a great importance for the viable development of our cities. Without public spaces, our urban societies do not have future. A community that shares a common place, interests and values can not be visualized, if the significance of urban public spaces is not recognized. The vitality, identity and character of public spaces are sustained by people’s interactions, activities and participation in the creation and transformation of cities. Public space processes need to be collaborative and participative

⁵ Chile Barrio Program introduced in 1998 by the Government of Chile under the administration of Eduardo Frei (Ministerio de Vivienda y Urbanismo) <http://www.chilebarrio.cl/>

where all interested parties are recognized, respected and taken into account. Jacobs and Appleyard (1996:497) describe the essential elements for a truly egalitarian public arena which results in a successful public space:

“We look towards a society that is truly pluralistic, one where power is more evenly distributed among social groups than it is today in virtually any country, but where the different values and cultures of interest and placed-based groups are acknowledged and negotiated in a just public arena”.

Public spaces are places where conflicts occur but where agreements and consensus should also be reached. Public spaces integrate communities, neighbourhoods and the citizens. They offer the opportunity for meaningful and rewarding experiences in the urban life. The existence of public spaces is essential for the sake of a viable, participative and integrative urban environment. As inhabitants of cities our duty is to promote the existence of public spaces for a sustainable life. It is our duty to work tenaciously if we want liveable cities, where communities come together, and enjoy a healthy and pleasant environment. Public spaces are essential elements in our lives.

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Appendix 1: List of Interviewees

1. Interviews with colonias' inhabitants:

Information: Name, Position in the neighbourhood and date of interview.

Colonia Revolucion

1. Alberto Gil. **Controller and Vigilant of the Committee of Improvement of Paseos de Xalapa Street.** 03 October 2002
2. Alberto Sanchez, **Secretary of the Committee of Improvement Carlos Segundo Street.** 26 August 2002
3. Alejandro Jacobo, **Resident of Alaminos Street.** 27 August 2002
4. Angel Barrientos Suarez. **Resident of Isabela Catolica Street (Jovita's Park).** 08 January 2002.
5. Arturo Olvera Perez. **Secretary Committee of Improvement of Paseos de Xalapa Street.** 09 August 2002
6. Candy Quiroz, **Treasurer of the Committee of Improvement of Zumarraga Street.** 24 August 2002
7. Carmen Romo. **Shop Owner of Atenas Veracruzana Street.** 25 October 2002
8. **Ciro Leon. Treasurer of the Committee of Improvement of Paseos de Xalapa Street.** 09 August 2002
9. **Conversation with 3 street vendors of the Tianguis of Atenas Veracruzana.** 17 October 2002
10. **Conversation with a Group of Youngsters (6 Basketball Players) of Solidaridad's Park.** 18 August 20002.
11. **Conversations with a (4) a group residents of Paseos de Xalapa Street.** 28 August 2002, 03 August 2002
12. **Conversations with various residents of Ciudad de las Flores Street.** 11 October 2002 , 16 October 2002, 19 October 2002
13. **Conversations with Residents (Invaders) of Jose Ma. Iglesias' Park.** 10 October 2002.
14. **Diego Fernandez. Resident of Pedro de Alvarado Street (Member of the Committee of Defence of Streets and Green Areas).** 05 October 2002
15. **Dora Rendón. Secretary of the Committee of Improvement of Solidaridad's Park.** 30 July 2002
16. **Elena Gonzalez. President of the Committee of Improvement of Felipe Cuarto Street.** 24
17. **October 2002**
18. **Dolores Gonzales Santos. President of the Committee of Improvement of Canalizo Street.** 22 November 2002.
19. **Elena Hernandez. Resident and Street vendor of C. de Olid Street.** 17 October 2002.
20. **Enrique Acosta. Resident of Paseos de Xalapa Street.** 09 August 2002, 22 August 2002, 22 and October 2002.
21. **Flora Lopez. Resident of Fernando Quinto Street.** 19 October 2002.

22. **Gabriel Yobal Vazquez. Resident of Pedro de Alvarado Street. Member of the Committee of Defence of Streets and Green Areas.** 06 October 2002
23. **Guadalupe Ramos. Resident of Division del Norte Street. Colonia Revolucion.** 10 January 2002
24. **Group of Residents of C. de Olid Stret.** 27 August 2002
25. **Group of youngsters in the basketball court of Alaminos Street.** 06 August 2002
26. **Group of Residents of Pedro de Alvarado Street.** 27 August 2002
27. **Guadalupe Meneses. Street vendor and Resident of Alaminos Street.** 14 October 2002
28. **Homero Ruiz. Resident and President of the Street Market of Atenas Veracruzana.** 19 November 2002.
29. **Humberto Espino. President of the Committee of Improvement of Paseos de Xalapa Street.** 11 August 2002, 16 August 2002, and 22 October 2002
30. **Jacobo Alejandro, Engineer, Designer of Colonia Revolucion.** 28 August 2002
31. **Jaime Rodriguez. Resident, promoter of Jovita's Park.** 08 August 2002.
32. **Jose Guadalupe. Resident and Mecanic of C. De Olid Street.** 10 January 2002
33. **Jorge Ramirez, President of the Committee of Improvement of Carlos Segundo Street.** 26 August 2002, 14 October 2002.
34. **Jovita Rodriguez Alvarez. President of the Committee of Improvement of Jovita's Park.** 08 August 2002, 13 August 2002, 05 October 2002, 16 October 2002, 17 October 2002, and 12 November 2002.
35. **Juan Hernandez Welsh. Former President of the Committee of Defence of Streets and Green Areas of Colonia Revolucion.** 05 August 2002 and 16 August 2002.
36. **Julia Robles. President of Committee of Improvement of Zavala Street.** 22 October 2002
37. **Lucha Rocha Leon, President of the Committee of Improvement Francisco Leon Street.** 14 September 2002
38. **Lucio Martinez. President of Committee of Improvement of Carlos Primero Street.** 24 October 2002
39. **Lucio Sanchez. Resident of Pedro de Alvarado Street (Member of the Committee of Defence of Streets and Green Areas).** 19 September 2002
40. **Manuel Benitez. Resident of Pedro de Alvarado Street.** 04 September 2002
41. **Manuel Gutierrez , Resident of Lorenzo de Zavala Street.** 02 August 2002
42. **Manuel Segundo. President of the Committee of Improvement of Zumarraga Street.** 13 November 2002.
43. **Marcos Gomez. President of the Committee of Improvement of Jose Ma. Iglesias' Park.** 06 October 2002
44. **Margarita Lopez. Resident living near to Solidaridad's Park.** 11 September 2002
45. **Maria Paz Quiñonez. Resident of Paseos de Xalapa Street.** 31 July 2002.

46. Maria Rafaela Ruiz . **Resident of Paseos de Xalapa Street.**08 August 2002.
47. Martín Barrientos. **Resident, promoter of Jovita's Park .**17 August 2002
48. Miguel Angel Barrientos. **Resident, promoter of Jovita's Park .**09 August 2002
49. Moises Juarez. **Secretary of the Committee of Improvement of Zumarraga Street.** 10 October 2002
50. Natalia Gonzales. **Resident of Zumarraga Street.** 29 August 2002
51. Pedro Dokor. **Resident of Martin de Valencia Street.** 20 August 2002
52. Reyna Rangel.**President of the Committee of Improvement of Pedro de Alvarado Street.** 12 August 2002
53. Rossana Casas. **Shop Owner of Atenas Veracruzana Street.** 25 October 2002
54. Santa Martinez and Husband. **Resident, promoter of Jovita's Park** 21 August 2002, and 14 September 2002
55. Severa Torres.**Resident of Atenas Veracruzana Street.** 21 August 2002
56. Sonia Rutereta. **Resident in Solidaridad's Park.** 11 September 2002
57. Susana Jaimes. **President of the Committee of Improvement of Orozco Street.** 19 October 2002
58. Trinidad Benitez. **Resident of Ciudad de las Flores Street (Member of the Committee of Defence of Streets and Green Areas).** 09 October 2002
59. Ventura Moreno. **Resident of Paseos de Xalapa Street.** 05 August 2002
60. Vicky Quiroz. **President of the Committee of Improvement of Zumarraga Street.** 24 August 2002, 08 September 2002, 21 September 2002 , 06 October 2002
61. Victoria Hernandez. **President of the Committee of Improvement C. de Olid Street.** 05 August 2002
62. Yolanda Rendón. **President of the Committee of Improvement of Solidaridad's Park.** 15 August 2002
63. Yolanda Cabanas Rendon. **President of the Committee of Improvement of Fernando Quinto Street.**19 October 2002.

Colonia 3 de Mayo

1. Ameyalli Gonzalez Garcia. **Architectural Student working in Colonia 3 de Mayo.** 09 December 2002
2. Dolores de Sanchez Juarez. **Treasurer of the Committee of Improvement of Colonias Unidas' Park.** 17 December 2002.
3. Francisco Méndez. **President of the Football ligue of Colonias Unidas Park.** 18 January 2002.
4. Isidro Rendon. **President of the Committee of Improvement of Colonias Unidas' Park.** 15 December 2002
5. Joaquina Cortez. **Secretary of the Committee of Improvement of Colonias Unidas' Park.** 19 December 2002.

6. **Martin Ortiz. Resident and founder of Colonia 3 de Mayo. 9 January 2004**

Colonia Ferrocarrilera

1. **Artemio Sanchez. President of the Committee of Improvement of Villahermosa's Park. 12 November 2002.**
2. **Conversations with 5 users of Villahermosa's Park. 07 June 2003.**
3. **Jaime Perez Hernandez. Resident and former railway worker of Colonia Ferrocarrilera. 5 January 2004.**
4. **Juana Cosme Perez. Food Vendor in Villahermosa's Park. 20 November 2002, 08 June 2003, 07 June 2003, and 10 January 2004.**
5. **Miguel Angel Soto. Resident and Shop-owner of Colonia Ferrocarrilera. 5 January 2004.**
6. **Modesto Cortez. Villahermosa's Park promoter. 23 September 2002.**
7. **Galdina Vazquez Dominguez. Former president of the Committee of Improvement of Villahermosa's Park. 05 June 2003.**

Colonia Constituyentes

1. **Alberto Hernandez Ramos. Controller and Vigilant of the Committee of Improvement of Constituyentes Green Area. 10 June 2003**
2. **Eduardo Damian. Resident of Colonia Constituyentes. 10 January 2004.**
3. **Ernesto Reyes Santos. Secretary of the Committee of Improvement of Constituyentes' Green Area. 23 January 2002, and 10 June 2003.**
4. **Everardo Canseco. Resident of Colonia Constituyentes. 10 January 2004.**
5. **Fernando Vazquez Acosta. President of the Committee of Improvement of Constituyentes' Green Area. 18 Enero 2002, 10 June, 2003, and 5 January 2004.**
6. **Lilia Palafox. President of the Committee of Improvement of Heriberto Jara Street. 23 November 2002.**
7. **Luis Gonzalez Garcia. Treasurer of the Committee of Improvement of Constituyentes' Green Area. 19 January 2002, 10 June 2003.**

Colonia Los Pinos

1. **Antonieta Menchaca. Resident and promoter of Mascarenas' Park. 30 November 2002.**
2. **Arturo Hinojosa. Secretary of the Committee of Improvement of Mascarenas' Park. 05 December 2002.**
3. **Conversation with the group of residents of Los Pinos, promoters of Mascarenas' Park. 28 November 2002.**
4. **Dolores de Sanchez Juarez. External promoter of Mascarenas' Park. 15 December 2002.**

5. **Guadalupe Morales Hernandez. Treasurer of the Committee of Improvement of Mascarenas' Park.** 10 December 2002
6. **Jose Joel Romero Gutierrez. President of the Committee of Improvement of Mascarenas' Park.** 10 December 2002
7. **Maria Carrillo. Resident and promoter of Mascarenas' Park.** 28 November 2002.
8. **Veronica de la Hidalga Ledesma. Resident and promoter of Mascarenas' Park.** 05 December 2002.

Community Meetings (Observations and Conversations in various colonias)

1. Community meeting in **Carlos Segundo Street in Colonia Revolucion.** 12 December 2002.
2. Community meeting in **Constituyentes' Green Area.** 19 November 2002.
3. Community meeting in **Emilio Carranza Street in Colonia Americas.** 03 August 2002.
4. Community meeting in **Lorenzo de Zavala Street in Colonia Revolucion.** 15 October 2002.
5. Community meeting in **Manuel Contreras Street in Colonia Rafael Lucio.** 13 August 2002.
6. Community meeting in **Mascarenas' Park.** 15 December 2002.
7. Community meeting in **Paseos de Xalapa Street in Colonia Revolucion.** 15 August 2002, 17 August 2002, and 04 October 2004.

Interviews in other colonias:

1. **Carmen Martinez. Resident of Colonia Lomas del Seminario.** 10 January 2002.
2. **Conversations with two residents of Colonia Lagunilla.** 13 September 2002.
3. **Conversations with the President and Secretary of the Committee of Improvement of Arrillaga Street in Colonia Alvaro Obregon.** 06 August 2002
4. **Jose Guadalupe Sanchez Ramirez. Promoter of Montezuma's Plaza, Colonia Centro.** 11 November 2002, 16 November 2002
5. **Maria de los Angeles Pale Viveros. Resident of Colonia Lerdo de Tejada.** 14 January 2002
6. **Martha Ladron de Guevara. President of the Committee of Improvement of a Playground in Colonia.** 8 January 2002.
7. **Patricia Arias. President of the Committee of Improvement of Federico Froebel Street, Colonia Obrera.** 21 August 2002

2. Interviews with Municipal and State Servants:

1. **Carlos Romero. Supervisor of the Municipal Office of Parks and Gardens.** 10 January 2002
2. **Diego Hernandez. Councillor of the Municipal Office of Parks and Gardens.** 13 December 2002.
3. **Jose Hernandez Diaz. Director of the Municipal Office of Public Works.** 14 January 2002

4. **Joaquin Saucedo. Director of the Municipal Office of Parks and Gardens.** 30 August 2002
5. **Jose Manuel Rodriguez. Citizen Participation Promoter.**13 August 2002, and 15 October 2002
6. **Maria Elena Pastrana. Head of Public Projects and Design Department at the Municipal Office of Public Works.** 19 December 2002
7. **Mario Martinez. Construction Supervisor of Public Works.** 18 October 2002
8. **Mateo Isidro Francisco Javier. Director of the Municipal Office of Citizen Participation.**16 January 2002
9. **Octavio Ramirez . Citizen Participation Promoter.** 06 August 2002
10. **Otilia Pino. Sub-director of the Municipal Office of Citizen Participation.** 01 August 2002
11. **Patricia Lopez. Head of the Municipal Office of the Historic Centre Revitalization.** 08 January 2002
12. **Rosita Hernandez. Citizen Participation Promoter.** 17 September 2002, 15 October 2002
13. **Xochitl Torres. Head of Planning and Urban Regulation Office of the Municipality.** 16 October 2002.

3. Interviews with academics of the University of Veracruz-Xalapa:

1. **Clio Capitanachi Moreno. Researcher at the Institute of Ecology.**16 August 2002
2. **Dr. Margarita Acosta. Lecturer at Faculty of Architecture.** 29 August 2002
3. **Dr. Ramon Ramirez Melgarejo. Researcher at the Institute of History and Social Research.** 06 August 2002
4. **Dr. Sergio Amante Haddad. Lecturer at Faculty of Architecture.** 10 August 2002
5. **Julio Sanchez Juarez. Lecturer at Faculty of Architecture.** 04 December 2002
6. **Leopoldo Reinecke. Lecturer at Faculty of Architecture.** 04 December 2002.
7. **Manuel Sobrino. Lecturer at the Faculty of Architecture.** 23 September 2002

4. Other Interviewees

1. **Alejandro Gaona (Architect).Contractor working in Paseos de Xalapa.** 21 October 2002
2. **Reynaldo Cravioto (Architect). Contractor working in Paseos de Xalapa.**16 August 2002

Appendix 2: Pilot Study Checklist

(First fieldwork stage)

Areas to explore in a first exploration of the public space in the colonias:

1. What kind of public spaces do we find in colonias populares?
2. Are there any parks, green spaces, pavements, streets, plazas, or alleys?
3. What are the physical conditions of these public spaces?
4. What are the morphological elements which form and define the public space?

Questions about the production of the public space:

5. How did /do the residents manage to transform and create the public spaces of the colonia?
6. Who were/are the actors involved in the negotiation process?
7. Who are the actors involved in the creation and configuration of the public space?
8. Did/do the residents participate in the improvement of the public space?
9. Is the municipality involved? How?
10. What are the different roles and activities?
11. What institutions are involved in these processes?

Questions about the use of the public space:

12. How is the public space used? By whom? What kind of activities takes place in the public space of the popular habitat?
13. How do the users interact with their public space?
14. What is their opinion of their public space? How do they perceive it? How do they see it in the future?
15. How do they plan to improve it? How is the public space maintained? Who carries out these activities?
16. Do residents participate in the maintenance of the public space?
17. What is the role of the municipality in the maintenance of public spaces?
18. What is the impact of public space improvement in their daily life?
19. What are the changes that they have observed in the use of the public space after the improvement?

Appendix 3: Interview Schedules

(Second fieldwork stage)

1. Interviews with key figures in the Municipality of Xalapa

Issues:

- Actors involved and roles
- Institutions and agencies
- Objectives and visions
- Relationships and interactions
- Actions
- Policies
- Negotiation process and decision making
- Spaces developed by the municipality(improvement programs

Objectives:

- To identify the different actions that the municipality, through its different offices, has undertaken to improve the public space in colonias populares.
- To identify the nature of the relationship between the municipality and their different offices, and the colonias populares in the shaping and transformation of the public space
- To identify the actions taken and the impact of these actions on the public spaces of colonias populares.

Questions to explore:

1. How important are public spaces in the municipal agenda?
2. What are the most important actions in the improvement of public space in the colonias populares?
3. What are the strategies or programs and policies that the municipality carries out in relation to public spaces in the colonias populares?
4. What are the main activities carried out by this office in relation to the improvement of the public space in the colonias?
5. What is the nature of the relationship between the municipality and the people of colonias populares during the improvements of the streets, parks, pavements and playgrounds, and open spaces?
6. What are the actions that residents of colonias populares take to improve or affect the public space in their neighbourhoods?
7. In your view, do you think people in the colonias are interested in improving and maintaining the public spaces?
8. In your view, what do you think is the perception of the people in colonias populares towards the public space?
9. What are the actions that should be encouraged in colonias populares for a better public space?

Note: These questions will be adapted to the different offices in the municipality

2. Colonias' general history

1. Who created the colonia?
2. How was the colonias created?

3. How has the colonia changed since its creation?
 4. How was the social life of the colonia at beginning? And what are the changes that you observed now?
 5. How was the colonia improved? Can you tell me the about the changes in streets, buildings, and services?
 6. When and how did these changes occur?
 7. What about the people living in the colonia?
-

2. Interviews and observations to examine the physical transformation of public spaces in the colonias:

(The questions of the first fieldwork stage should be combined with this)

Issues to explore:

- Process development and stages
- Actors involved and roles
- Objectives and visions, perceptions
- Relationship and interaction
- Actions
- Negotiation process and decision making
- Spaces developed spontaneously by the community
- Spaces developed by the municipality.

Questions about the physical production and transformation of public spaces:

About planning:

1. How did you manage to get the improvements of your public space?
2. Who participated in the improvements? How were they carried out?
3. Did the municipality participate in the processes of improvement?
4. How did the residents interact with the municipality?
5. What were the problems experienced in this relationship?
6. What physical transformations were/are carried out by the community?
7. What physical transformations were/are carried out by other actors?

About design:

1. Who designed the transformations? The residents? Professionals?
2. How did the actors interact in the design process?
3. What were the main ideas for the design of the public space?
4. Who decided the physical form and materials used in the improvements?
5. Were the expectations of the users taken into account in the design of the public space?
6. Whose ideas are most reflected in the physical form of the space?
7. What are the most salient morphological elements and characteristics that define the character of public spaces?

About the construction:

1. Who constructed the space?
2. Did residents participate in the construction? How?
3. Did the municipality participate in the construction? How?
4. How did the construction process take place?
5. What was the role of the residents and other external actors in the construction of the space?
6. How did the construction process affect residents' daily life?

7. What local knowledge was used to carry out the construction process?

About Maintenance:

1. What are the current physical conditions of the public spaces?
 2. Who is in charge of the maintenance the space?
 3. How is the community participating in maintenance?
 4. Do the majority of people care about the maintenance of the space?
 5. Are there plans for further improvement?
 6. Is there any community organization to maintain the space?
 7. Are there any conflicts or problems around the maintenance and management of the space?
 8. Is there any municipal support (programme) for the maintenance of public spaces in the colonias?
-

3. Interviews and observations to examine the social transformation of public spaces of the colonias:

Issues to explore:

- Social transformation,
- Daily interaction people-space.
- Uses and appropriation, conflicts,

Questions about the uses and social transformation of public spaces:

1. Who uses the public spaces? And how do they use them?
To take into account: ages, gender, and groups.
2. What the activities take place? At what time?
3. How is the public space used for working activities?
4. How are the different public spaces used for resting or relaxation, and socializing?
5. What changes in the use and appropriation (social life) are due to the physical changes and improvement of public spaces?

Questions to users of the public spaces (streets and neighbourhood parks):

1. Do you go out to: play, sit, talk, watch people, meet friends, have parties? Or do you use the street just to go to work or to go to other places?
2. What about your parents or other adults, do they go out to: talk, chat, or meet the neighbours?
3. Do you play games in the streets/parks? What kind of games?
4. What do you remember about the street/park before the changes? How did people use it before the improvement?
5. What changes have you seen in the life of the street/park after the improvements?
6. Do people spend longer outside now?
7. What about parties, or other events, do any take place in the street/park?
8. How are the streets and parks used on weekdays and at weekends?
9. What are the positive attributes and qualities of the public space identified by residents?
10. What do you think of the street, or park now?
11. Did it become noisier and busier? Why?
12. Do you think it is prettier, or uglier, better or worst? Why?
13. What about peoples' behaviour, what differences do you see now in comparison with the past?
14. What is the importance of the improvements in the life of the colonia and the residents?

15. What are the current problems in the use of the public spaces?

Observing the uses of public spaces:

1. To make annotated drawings and plans with annotated information about activities, materials and changes.
 2. To identify users and time.
 3. To record differences in use due to physical changes and transformation.
 4. To record daily movements and activities that defines the nature of the public space in the popular habitat at different times: Daily, monthly, annually.
 5. To identify different groups and individuals using and appropriating the space.
 6. To identify physical territories defined by individuals and groups.
 7. To identify physical and symbolic boundaries.
 8. Identify users by gender, age, and activities.
 9. Population counts: (people in the spaces by gender at different times: morning, afternoon, evening) with some ethnographical description of activities.
 10. Movement maps: To follow pedestrian movement by gender at different times, and record what they do, where they are going.
 11. Behavioural maps: Record different groups using the space (such as activities of women, students, gangs, men, etc) recording behaviours and location of individuals
 12. To observe forms, meanings of uses and differences between users.
 13. To take photographs.
-

4. Collection of supportive information about the public space development.

1. To visit the Archives of the Municipality of Xalapa: to find out information from the City council's annual reports.
2. To find out about the history of the colonia and everything related to the life and in particular to the public space transformation.
3. Check newspapers: news about the colonias populares.
4. Find photographs of colonias populares in archives and with the residents
5. Obtain statistical socio-demographic data about the case study
6. Plans of the colonias and city.

Appendix 4: An interview (in Spanish)

An extract of an interview with Señora Jovita Rodríguez Álvarez, Jaime Rodríguez (father), and Martin and Miguel Ángel Barrientos (youngsters).

Place: Jovita's Park in Colonia Revolucion

Date: 08 August 2002

Summary

This interview took place in Jovita Park. The interviewees were Señora Jovita, who is the main promoter of the park; her father, Señor Jaime Rodríguez and the two youngsters, Martin and Miguel Ángel. The interview started with Jovita and her father and later on Martin and Miguel Ángel joined the conversation. This interview is about the development of the park. Jovita and her father discussed different issues; they discussed how they started the improvement; how they got help from the municipality; and how they encouraged the community to participate. Moreover, Martin and Miguel Ángel described how children participated in the construction of the space.

Mauricio: Mire estoy haciendo un trabajo sobre el espacio público, es espacio público en las colonias populares

Jovita: A que bueno a que bien, mire yo lo hice para niños de escasos recursos, se lo entregue al gobierno con los arbolitos sembrados más pequeñitos, pintados con cal, no precioso estaba el parque si, ahí tengo muchas fotos cuando inicie, si ahí las tengo...

Papa de Jovita: Si es que ella se sacrifico en hacer ahí los jardincitos que esto y aquello, todos estos arbolitos ella los sembró hace 15 años, y fueron creciendo, y entonces ya el municipio viendo que se había entusiasmado mucho, ya le ayudo y le hice el parque en forma, y por eso muchos lo conocían o lo conocen por el parque Jovita. La mayoría lo conoce con otro nombre, y tiene su reconocimiento, enséñale tu reconocimiento, y gracias a su entusiasmo de ella después ayudo a gestionar, el de aquí frente.

Jovita: Mira este es el reconocimiento que me dio el municipio por la obra que hice para los niños: "El H. Ayuntamiento constitucional de Xalapa, Veracruz, otorga el presente reconocimiento a Jovita Rodríguez Álvarez como un testimonio de gratitud por su labor social en defensa de nuestras áreas verdes y por su meritorio trabajo al servicio de la comunidad y sus jóvenes, Xalapa Enríquez Veracruz, a 2 de mayo de 1994" Armando Méndez de la Luz como presidente.

Mira aquí esta foto de cómo estaba el area, mira aquí esta Jovita con los niños a grandes rasgos mira como lo construimos (Saca una cartulina en donde esta un recuento histórico de la construcción del parque). Mire este parque lo hicieron los niños con Jovita, no hubo ni un comité ni nada. Fue una obra bella, única a nivel estatal...ya no se a nivel nacional.

Papa de Jovita: Los primeros columpios y la resbaladilla los consiguió ella.

Jovita: Se los regalaba yo de 30 de abril y hay unos columpios ahí que son míos que no los puso el gobierno, si mira aquí están los fotos de cómo fue que se construyo...

Papa de Jovita: Si ella puso los primeros columpios ya después el gobierno puso otros y vino a inaugurar el gobernador con su esposa... y ya ellos mismos dijeron que si que le pusieran parque Jovita.

Jovita: Y le iban a nombrar "Parque Profesor David Ramírez Lavoignet"

Mauricio: ¿Y porque a ese nombre?

Jovita: Porque iban a festejarle al maestro, pero entonces se molestaron los vecinos. Hubo una asamblea entre los vecinos para ponerle el nombre y surgieron tres nombres. Uno día del niño, el otro, parque caritas sonrientes y el otro era el parque Jovita., y los vecinos no dijeron que se llamara Parque Jovita.

Papa de Jovita: y vinieron los del diario, los del periódico, los del grafico, si ahí tengo el recorte del periódico ahorita te lo enseño.

Una cosa importante que nos paso es que como vieron que estaba despoblado todo, entonces se metieron los paracaidistas, pero entre ellos y todos los vecinos... los enganchamos y los sacamos porque era dedicado para

parques, entonces ella dijo aunque me cueste yo no se como le hago pero yo voy a hacer el parque por mi cuenta entonces compro el columpio y la resbaladilla y las puso.

Jovita: mira este niño es uno de los que ayudaron, por ahí lo tengo en una foto, mira ya es un joven el y sigue ayudando, sigue colaborando...

Si recibí muchas felicitaciones por parte de las autoridades por la labor, debido a la obra, y por los niños... mira el ahora es joven y el ayuda, por ahí esta con la grava, y eso.

Mauricio: ¿bueno tu cuantos años tienes entonces?

Martín: pues ahorita tengo 17 años.

Mauricio: ¿y cuando empezaron hacer el parque cuantos tenías?

Martín: pues tenía como unos seis o 7 años algo así.

Mauricio: ¿entonces toda tu vida haz andado aquí jugueteando?

Papa de Jovita: Pues si el es vecino de aquí del parque y de la colonia, y si nos ha ayudado.

Martín: Jovita no me encuentro

Jovita: Si mira mijo aquí estas, aquí esta tu hermanita, aquí también que ya es una señorita. Ahora mira aquí esta tu hermanita en una resbaladilla y mira ellos son los iniciadores del parque.

Mauricio: ¿Y tú que hacías platicame?

Martín: Pues acarreaba las cubetas de grava me acuerdo que era desde allá, para acá....

Mauricio: ¿Y la grava para que era? Platicame

Jovita: si platicale al muchacho porque a el interesa...

Martín: Pues si creo que era para hacer la guarnición de donde esta el adoquín. Si para ayudar a la construcción del parque si, pero si eran muchos niños no nada mas yo iba yo acarreando el adoquín, y también cargaba yo la madera, cargaba yo y se las traía yo aquí.

Mauricio: ¿Y para que era la madera?

Martín: para hacer las cadenas para los columpios donde están ahora los aros...

Jovita: mira como lo tienen ahora los niños ahora, mira que bonito que ellos lo digan es bello, porque eran chiquitos.

Mauricio: ¿Y bueno ahora que piensa del parque ahora?

Jovita: Si mijo tu como joven ¿que opinas?, ¿estuvo bien o no?

Martín: Pues el parque ha seguido así igual por los juegos, antes había menos y ahora mas lo que no me gusta es el pasto y hace monte

Jovita: Si es que el gobierno puso de ese pasto como se llama, de esa estrella y entonces se hace como mecate, y lo tenemos que estar chapeando siempre, aquí le hubieran puesto de ese pasto alfombra

Martín: y me gusta que esta acercado y pues y la tela pues lo bueno que no la han tirado como a la cancha ya vez que como han tirado la tela.

Jovita: Si la destruyeron

Papa de Jovita: Ellos se han avocado a cuidarlo a que lo respeten, cuando ven a alguien ahí que esta tratando de destruir algo le llaman la atención y se le dice no por favor, se va a caer la red, la tela.

Mauricio: ¿Si ustedes se han dedicado a cuidar?

Jovita: Si que no destruyan... y si funciona porque entender a los niños no es fácil y si ellos si obedecen, si me obedecen ya ni en su casa obedecen como a mi

Mauricio: ¿Y quien lo limpia, quien limpia el parque?

Jovita: Haber tu dile tu que has visto...

Martín: Pues doña Jovita, hay muchos que ayudan y muchos que no. Exactamente ayer en la mañana la ayude un ratito a chapear

Jovita: Y pues si es trabajo que se hace y cuesta el mantenimiento, el me ayudo ahora y si le sigue dando con el azadón.

Mauricio: ¿Y de los antes, de los niños que venían antes siguen ayudando, siguen viniendo?

Jovita: Algunos ya se fueron, ya se han ido ya se casaron, algunos ya se ha ido a vivir a otras colonias... estudiaron. Pero la mayoría sigue viniendo.

Mauricio: Mira que bonitas fotos... mira

Jovita: Si todo el proceso lo tengo ahí y pues sobre todo para enseñarle a la familia, a los niños que si se puede, que si se puede hacer una obra, que cuesta trabajo pero que si se puede. A mi me encanta el parque, es bello, a mi me encanta...

Papa de Jovita: Y ella les dijo algún día este lugar se va a poner bonito, este parquecito, le vamos a echar ganas y me tienen que ayudar y si le ayudaron!

Mauricio: ¿Y como, porque, como de donde salio su motivación para arreglar el parque?

Jovita: Pues es que mi papa aquí presente, y mi mama me enseñaron a amar a la gente. Debido a eso quiero mucho a los niños a los ancianitos, a los jóvenes, entonces hice algunos cursitos por ahí que me ayudaron mas para entender un poquito mas a la gente, entonces por ahí tengo unas credenciales que soy defensor de áreas verdes, vocal de seguridad publica, por que hice mi curso de protección civil, hice mi curso el que mas me encanta es el de primeros auxilios, prevención de accidentes, para cuidar enfermos, he trabajado también con enfermitos, ancianitos.. Sobre todo que necesitan mucho de nosotros y así me enseñaron a humanista y de eso me nace trabajarle para los demás, y echarles todas las ganas al azadón

Martín: y hasta hizo un parque.

Mauricio: ¿y le ayudo la gente de por aquí?

Jovita: Bueno aquí se ve pero ayudaron los niños, casi los niños eran los que se juntaban, se acercaban.

Mauricio: ¿y los adultos no ayudaban, los de su misma a edad?

Jovita: ¿Pues no casi no por ahí se acercaban unos dos o tres ... pero muy poco, una media hora y ya se iban . Pero nada más los niños, trabaje con los niños.

Martín: Aquí nos andábamos peleando hasta por las palas, se peleaban yo quiero llenar, yo quiero apalear, ahí nos estábamos peleando.

Jovita: Todos esos niños ya son jóvenes ahorita, ya son grandes, los iniciadores del parque, pero siempre sigue habiendo niños y seguimos trabajando para ellos

Mauricio: ¿Y como le hizo para ponerlos a trabajar a los chiquillos?

Jovita: Pues platicando con ellos, platicando con ellos, y metiéndose a su mundo de ellos, me ayudo bastante que yo trabaje en kinder, en el area maternal, cuidando niños, entonces eso me ayudo a entender a los niños, luego a ellos platicando como si fueran grandes, así les hablo yo... mira allá están solitos jugando y que se tienen que cuidar unos a otros, es un bombardeo de conocimientos para la niñez, entonces se le enseñe a que deben compartir los juegos, que deben cuidar y mira ahí están que deben compartir que no deben pelear.

Papa de Jovita: Si mira ahí esta el parque Jovita.

Jovita: Es bella la obra, a mi me encanta...

Mauricio: ¿Y ya estaban pavimentadas las calles aquí cuando construyeron el parque?

Jovita: No, no nada, tres años estuvieron sacando piedra aquí, no aquí no estaba pavimentado nada...

Martín: esta foto es la de esquina, y mira esta casa era así, y ahora esta mas arreglada.

Mauricio: ¿Y aquí que hay sillas que estaban haciendo? (refiriéndose a la foto)

Jovita: Mira ahí en ese lugar donde están los juegos ahí les hacia yo fiestas a los niños cada 30 de abril, les hacia yo fiestas, les dábamos juguetes, y si seguimos haciéndolas, de vez en cuando, les damos un juguetito. Aquí y había un payasito, en esta foto era 30 de abril...por eso yo quería que se llamara 30 de abril por los niños que se hizo para los niños.

Papa de Jovita: La asamblea acordó que se llamara Jovita, porque si realmente ella fue lo que lo inició y la que hizo. Mira aquí están todas las fotos.

Mauricio: ¿y este plano?

Jovita: era para el parque, y no fue hecho este, pero no fue este porque pusieron aquella parte para triciclos y para que jugaran los niños.

Mauricio: ¿y quien lo hizo este?

Jovita: y lo hicieron allá en municipio. Y no hicieron este plano porque hicieron algo para los niños allá. O sea yo pedí a las autoridades que a nombre de los niños por favor que ayúdenme a nombre de los niños, y bueno al principio como que no me creían ya después me vinieron a ver a tomar fotos, a ver si deberás quería yo a los niños.

Mauricio: ¿Y ustedes aceptaron dijeron si queremos así, o no cámbienlo?

Jovita: No pues ellos lo cambiaron mandaron arquitectos que aquí estuvieron viendo el area... y todo, y si hubo arquitectos para hacer la obra. Gobierno ayudo mucho y mandaron a los albañiles y vinieron arquitectos y no me acuerdo de sus nombres pero aun así los niños siempre estuvieron ayudando.

Mira esta foto la tome a propósito con unas dos o tres señoras entonces la tome a propósito para que en el futuro que vieran que los grandes no participaban, es la única forma de enseñarle a los niños y mira en esta acá otra los niños están trabajando y que diferencia, que diferencia.

Este ejemplo se puede tomar para otros lugares. Aquí lo construimos con los niños

Martín: Mira aquí estamos mi hermano el mayor, mi papa, y un vecino que se llama don Carlos. Aquí mi papa iba a acarrear estos palos para sostener, hacer los primeros columpios, para los aros ahora...

Jovita: Si ya después de la faena, comíamos juntos en el parque todos., ahí jugábamos con los niños, y pues me metía al mundo de ellos a jugar con ellos...

Martín: Mira, ahí aquí ves como era la calle no estaba pavimentada, mira aquí esta la casa de doña Jovita, la de Isabela Catolica mira aquí estamos sentados.

Jovita: y mira ahí están los niños trabajando mira como son más niños que adultos.